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The rhetorical diversions of the Renaissance have made a comeback today in many seats of learning, even though the only tongue in use is the vernacular and the Departments concerned are those of Eng Lit. Sweet rhetoric is all the rage, and the corporate enthusiasm for it would have delighted Don Armado; indeed it would not be too much to say that the kinds of pleasure in poetry displayed and evoked in the writings of Professors Bloom, Hollander, and Hartman in America, and of Christopher Ricks in England, would have been more immediately comprehensible and congenial to the *literati* of the Middle Ages, and of the Elizabethans and Augustans, than would the kinds of pleasure felt and expressed about poetry by the modernists and new critics of the last generation or two.

The feelings of such critics - poets too - and the metaphors they put them in, now seem old-fashioned. Philip Larkin, bless him, says that a poem is a complete thing, like an egg. Yes, it is, like Keats's impression of the awareness of his billiard-ball. But that is not the way we look at it today, any more than they would have done in the days of the schoolmen. "Uplian serves my need" as Kipling's Mr King would, imitatively, observe; and Kipling himself would have relished the echo-seeking expertise of this new poetical inner ring. One is always on the outside of an egg, or of a billiard ball; indeed to be so is a *sine qua non* of appreciating it as it is in itself. But Professor Hollander is not the first to point out that if you look at it in this way we are "into poetry" in the most literal sense. The poem is a ghost we walk through, lending it airy substance by our progress, a bundle of echoes that exist because we catch and pass them on. "Such is

a true ghost: like all phenomena of this sort, we must always wonder what our own contribution was - how much we are always being writers as well as readers of what we are seeing."

The ghost metaphor is a true one; if we think we have seen a ghost no one can deny it; the vision becomes our property, a true ghost indeed. Hollander is himself a poet, and his most recent collection has the appropriate title *Spectral Emanations*, making a ghostly package-deal out of Blakean mythology (but there is nothing ghostly about Blake's little chimney-sweeps, or his Tyger). The figure of Echo represents for the author the sound itself, carried forward in a dying fall from one generation of poems to the next, the special cunning of literary allusion, and the workings of the ancient trope of metalepsis, or transumption.

Ancient, but not much valued, at least not by Quintilian.

It is a trope with which to claim acquaintance, rather than one which we are ever likely to require to use. The commonest example is the following: *canto* is a synonym for *canto* and *canto* for *dico*, therefore *canto* is a synonym for *dico*, the intermediate step being provided by *canto*. We need not waste any more time over it.

That does not sound very promising. But Hollander's enthusiasm is infectious, as it was in his last book, *Violon and Resonance*, and he not only traces with wit and discernment the possible uses that can be found for this figure but makes out a good case for its generic convenience as a term for the processes that render poetry transparent, subject to, and deliberately inviting, all the collective intimacies of implication, the short cuts of communal awareness.

Such intimacies are what those who read poetry in this way read poetry for, becoming as part of the business the "private friends" of the poet in a way that would have been understood by Shakespeare or Donne. Psychologically it is perhaps ultimately a question of whether we want the poetry to belong to the poet or to us. Shakespeare's sonnets,

now so wholly and mysteriously his own, were once no doubt appreciated on a basis of sharing, of tropes in widest commonality spread. Personally I remember the feeling of depression attendant on discovering that part of the cunning phrase for a meeting at dawn in *East Coker* - "that pointed scrutiny with which we challenge / The first-met stranger in the waning dusk" - had been supplied to Eliot by John Hayward in the course of an invited discussion and criticism of the poem. That is how rhetoric works, an occasion for wit in others, the poet projected beyond himself, his felicitates most improved when most seemingly his own.

The ghostliness of the phrase consists in our awareness that dusk deepens, draws down blinds etc. The echoic metalepsis (I think Hollander would allow his convenient terminology in the context of the phrase) lends the reader in a state of disposition associated with the state of the light: the echo is a reassurance of parting day, the new sound a disquietment of dawn, in which a ghost is that much more rhetorically convincing. Only rhetorically perhaps, but that is the point. We are in a rhetorical situation, of the sort with which Milton and Spenser would have been entirely familiar, in which whole traditions of poetry and feeling are summoned invisibly up. *East Coker* is certainly not like an egg, or a billiard-ball. Rhetoric reaches beyond the language of the living and removes any sense of its personal opacity, the opacity that goes - as in Keats say, or Hardy - with specific individual perception. "The waning dusk" is not the phrase of a man looking to notice such things, as is Hardy's for when the note of a funeral bell is heard across landscape

And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings, Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom.

Hardy's own and actual ears remove any possibility of an internal, poetic echo. In spite of the rhetorical echoes in its opening line - "When the present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay" - "After-

wards" is not a culturally ghostly poem of the type that arouses Hollander's enthusiasm. It puts us in touch not with the poetic past but with the poet himself, showing us that Larkin's "egg-like" poetry belongs to the poet, while rhetorical poetry tends to the status of a communal possession. And that seems to be the status preferred once again today in academic circles.

The echoic figure of metalepsis, used as a convenient catch-all by Hollander, could indeed be said to cover the whole range of rhetorical commonplace more specifically associated with synecdoche and metonymy - a single poetic property suggesting a whole, a mention representing a deployment as all are time-honoured figures making out of rhetoric a conscious gloss on the world of metaphor. This is neatly exemplified in Hollander's prefatory poem, whose tone and tendency would have been quite familiar, *mutatis mutandis*, to original readers of Milton and Marvell, Pope, Landor or Matthew Arnold. "Voices of the dead" are heard, says the poem, only in the language of the living, not in the scholars who "turn dead in the living air" or in those "wise embalmers of the text" in leather bindings "who come / To show how gold they are, and dumb." The punning echoes of Wallace Stevens's "Empire or of Ice Cream" ("If her horny feet protrude they come / To show how cold she is, and dumb") carry, like Eliot's *Waste Land* quotations, their due charge of iconographical irony. "Old books" are as resonant in themselves as the modern artefacts in Stevens's contemporary death scene; but rhetoric, properly appreciated, hands on the sound and secret of poetic vitality. This modern attitude is distinctly at variance with former received ideas about "dead form", "stale artifice", "worn-out commonplaces", "make it new" etc. For Hollander, metalepsis or transumption are more in the mind than on the page, a question of reverence and taste, and of the continuing influence of the ghostliness in poems.

And not, it might be added, in poems only. David Lodge has shown how something pictorially very com-

parable to echoic metalepsis has become an effective commonplace of the cinema, and a continued source of its specialized narrative vitality. A cigar, just lit, smokes in an ashtray: in the next shot nine parts of it are a column of ash: the men of affairs, gangsters or whatever, have been engrossed in their business, and the audience not only take this in at once but are reassured by the familiarity of the topos: they have been there before, but the vitality of the device is perennial. This, in its altered context, is Hollander's "figure of interpretive allusion". What about a handful of ash but of dust? Waugh's use of it comes of course from *The Waste Land*, but it returns to the despair of a more literal vision in Tennyson's *Maud*. "Dead, dead, long dead / And my heart is a handful of dust / And the wheels go over my head". The echo seems as unmistakable as that of "O swallow swallow", and those from Tennyson's *Ulysses* which came out when at Pound's suggestion the original "Death by Water" section was drastically cut down. It seems doubtful that Waugh was thinking of Tennyson, but the predicament of Tony Last at the end of the novel, dead to the world but still alive and sentient, certainly echoes that of Tennyson's imagined suicide.

Transumption, as Hollander demonstrates, can carry its significance as a matter of letters rather than words. "Like the clashed edges of two words that kill" (Stevens's "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle") assumes a metaleptic echo of "swords". Poetry can have its own kinds of aphesis, as an ekt turns by linguistic change into a new. In "A Dream of Fair Women" Tennyson implies signs by writing signs. John Ashbery's "The mooring of starting out" moves sideways not only into morning but into homecoming too, in the same way that Eliot's dusk moves metaleptically between dawn and evening. The "blind feet" of *Oedipus at Colonus* are a simple synecdoche, but the rhetorical plot thickens when Milton turns them into "blind mouths", in an unstated transition through false preaching and greedy eating. One of the most convincing and ingenious

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cases of buried echo proposed by Hollander is the City of Lincoln speech of President Lincoln, usually considered, as he says, "a monument of the anti-monumental", of a new and proper nobility in plainness. Restoration of allusion reveals something rather different, a subtle metamorphosis of two key biblical statements. In Genesis the land brought forth grass, at God's command: a mere fourscore and seven years ago our forefathers brought forth on this piece of earth a new nation. More daringly, whereas fallen scriptural man is conceived in sin, this nation was conceived in liberty.

Such resonance is no part of the nature of stately language, which obtains its effects of significance less from what it says itself than from the laden traditions of sonority. The effect can be paradoxical, for Lincoln's speech sounds, as it was intended to, both laconic and sturdily individual, dismissive of a whole tradition of loquacity. Curious, too, that a phrase which became almost as resonant for the poetry of Confederate defeat as Lincoln's had been for the sober God-fearingness of the Union victory, is based on a naive misreading of its source. Dowson wrote: "I have forgot much, Cynara, gone with the wind, / Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng, / Dancing to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind." These lilies may have got into Miss Mitchell's mind as southern belles, but this does not explain the change from the positively transitive mood of Dowson's verb — going with the wind was an abandoned experience, like going with a prostitute. Hollander ingeniously suggests that the ghost of Shelley may have got between Miss Mitchell's mind's eye and the already famous recollected phrase. "Leaves from an enchanter, fleeing — Shelley's west wind — may be blowing through the mistake." Echo here sounds not forward but back; the phrase only wanders in resonance in a previous romanticism of bird and rose, and from this it takes over the present melancholy of a vanished heroic world. It is singular that Joyce uses it in the Aeneas chapter of *Ulysses* in exactly the same sense. "Gone with the wind. Hosts at Mullagh-na-Joy and Tara of the kings." A Joyce-Mitchell axis is most unlikely, but both authors seem to have known by instinct the right way the echo sought to go.

There is, too, a poetry of crossed echoes, like crossed telephone lines, which suggests to me that though poems feed on previous poems they should obtain their own specific reality from the process. At ghost should be, drink dark blood, acquire solid form. Wallace Stevens, whom Hollander justly imputes to be the ghostliest of all echo-sounding poets, frequently reads like an unplaced pastiche — where exactly does the ghostliness come from? This gives its peculiarly disembodied note to "Sunday Morning". We know that we have read something like "The maidens' tale / And stray impassioned in the littering leaves" many times before; it appears as a filmy image, a nineteenth-century poem — which indeed might seem to be the disconcerting intention of the poet. Stevens seems concerned to muffle echo by using it as a device for producing lines of free-floating poeticality. Retrieval is sometimes practicable but always uninteresting. Hollander points out that the lines in "Notes-Toward a Supreme Fiction", not for that mind composed / A voluminous master folded in his fire connect with "Midnight is just a compass du feu" in Valéry's "Le Cimetière marin". Yes, but what is the point? Where in the coincidence of compass and fire does poetic reality appear at times more a dangerous form of generic imitation.

As such it may have been no more conscious, in specifically verbal sense, than the coincidence of movement, noted by I. A. Richards, between Tennyson's "The woods decay, the woods decay and fall", and Empson's "The waste remains, the waste remains and kills". Where cadence is concerned all poets have in their heads the same basic echoes. Much more revealing can be the handing down of regal words crowned by some notable usage. It could be argued that Shelley produces an effect of nullification in his

own verse when he quotes *Measure for Measure*'s "skyeey influences" in "When to outstrip thy skyeey speed / Source seemed a vision", and so does Coleridge when he uses the same word in "Lines on an Autumnal Evening". In terms of their diction these poems are almost by intention transparent, like poetical commentaries from the sidelines. Linguistically speaking much in them seems given up to romantic admiration of Shakespeare, but that is emphatically not the case when Keats changes "the viewless winds" of *Measure for Measure* into "the viewless wings of poetry" in the Nightingale Ode, even though the Keatsian usage is strictly an impoverishment of sense — how can wings be invisible? — and may indicate a misunderstanding comparable to Miss Mitchell's, or indeed to Blake's, when he engraved the "sightless couriers of the air" as blindfolded.

But that is just the point. The truly effective echo is also another coinage, as rich or richer? Hollander's insistence on a ghostly line of transmission ignores this. Blake's blindfolded steeds are a marvellous new birth, disregarding the sense of the Shakespearean epithet but exploiting its potentialities. So with Keats's "viewless wings", which in a very Keatsian way suggest that Poesy does not know where she is going — I cannot see what flowers are at my feet. The significance is precisely in the change from an exact, transparent epithet to an idiosyncratic and opaque one. If Hollander had considered what happened to "sightless" and the even more remarkable split association in the handing-on of "darkening", he would perhaps have had to conclude that the real interest of his trope is not that it compounds the rhetorical abstraction of the allusive mode, but that it can produce a new sort of solid reality, from which the veil of allusion has largely disappeared.

"Darkling" is a particularly ambiguous case. Hollander is convinced that Keats's use of it in the Nightingale Ode includes "an acknowledgement of its source, as if to say 'Darkling, I listen to Milton's darkling'". Surely not so. It is true, as he points out, that the adjective shifts metaphorically from performance to response, from active to passive, but it is more important that it takes on a whole new range of active meaning. When Shelley borrows Milton's "unpremeditated verse", and transfers the epithet to the Skylark's "profuse strains of unpremeditated art", he is only transferring Milton's conception of the majestically easy flow of muse-inspired poetry to the spontaneous harmony of a romantic and symbolist bird. But when Keats shifts "darkling" something quite different happens. Milton's "wakeful bird" only "sings darkling" because it sings by night, but in Keats the word has become sensuous and personal; transferred to the poet it expresses everything about his state of mind, his occluded tenderness and receptivity, his simultaneous fulfillment of being and desire to shed it.

Hollander misses this by missing the other quite different poetic context of "darkling". Keats possibly thought neither of Milton nor *King Lear*, but the latter is always in his letters and is more likely to be in the context of the poem. But Hollander is fixated on the Miltonic echo.

It is the cave of creativity-as-response from which the nymph calls here, as well as the neighboring one of song-out-of-darkness. In Matthew Arnold there is a systematic emptying of the word of its sense. He seizes upon it. In "Dover Beach" it is a mode of relatively hollow allusion.

Granted that Aristotle's use of the "darkling plain" is as academic as much else in what is none the less a very moving poem, Arnold may use it as if from a museum, though his use is less arid than that of Wallace Stevens, and yet the allusion here is certainly not a hollow one. The Poet says: "Then out went the candle and we were left darkling." That is our nineteenth-century condition, when the candle of belief and divine purpose has been put out. For Keats too, in his trance-like state, something like belief has been extinguished.

The title of Hardy's poem "The Darkling-Thrush" (first titled "The Century's Death-bed") may reveal

the same line of significance. The word attached to the thrush has a rhetorical transference to everything the age — with its "little cause for courtings" — seems to be. But the bird itself, singing its "happy good night air", is as indifferent to all these gloomy abstractions of the Zeitgeist as if it knew them to be beside the point. Hollander observes that "the image of the bird is a complex, consciously late reworking of the Miltonic and romantic images". But in fact the poem works by consciously invoking all those images and then dissipating them, as if accidentally, in the unexpectedness of its own being. The true contrast in the poem is between the ghost bird of literature and the actual thrush of Hardy's observation.

Hollander's book is fascinating reading for any lover of poetry and the ways in which it works, but I think it would have been even more so if he had recognized these sorts of distinction, and showed how an echo can be broken off, as it were, by a new sort of reality. Poems do not exist just to show us their relation to previous poems. "The Darkling Thrush" is a good example, as would be "Resolution and Independence", in which Wordsworth's Leech Gatherer plays a role rather similar to Hardy's thrush. Indeed it seems to me that Hardy's "aged thrush, frail gaunt and small" may well show an unconscious recollection of Wordsworth's old man, which might be one up to Hollander, except that in both cases the highly literary build-up of the two encounters, the status of the two figures in them as portents, is dissolved by their reality as creatures. Both poems act as reproaches to the tendency of poets to read life through the spectacles of books.

For rhetoricians there is no other way to read it. Reality, as Stevens would tell us, is "a world of words to the end of it". (Word and world here are no doubt metaphoric echoes of each other.) And it is perfectly true that much poetry does and did establish its reality in relation to that of other poetry, as Carew establishes erotic reality in his poem "A Rapture" in relation to the time-honoured symbolism of gardens, and the more immediate one of Spenser's "Bower of Bliss". Moreover a poet may use the comfort of rhetoric as a more or less conscious defence against emotions or impulses which elsewhere in his verse come straight out at us, giving its most characteristic form of personal reality. It is certainly true, as Hollander points out, that Coleridge's "God moves in a mysterious way", suggesting that the mystery is as paradoxical as Satan in hell left at large to his own "dark designs" which "serv'd but to bring forth / Infinite goodness". God's purposes become virtually at one with Satan's in location and technique.

Deep in unshakable mines Of never-failing skill, He treasures up his bright designs, And works his sovereign will.

But though doubts and glooms may indeed be expressed through this equivocal use of familiar imagery, they are nothing like so moving as Cowper's own personal imagery for his predicament, the imagery of wreck and wreck — "I tempest-tossed and shipwrecked at last / Came home to port no more" — and of the castaway. Poets have their personal metaphors; they do not always read their fates in books and make their poems out of them.

Of course it is because Milton or Spenser read through the spectacles of books that the experts in rhetoric today insist on our doing the same. But there is another and more obvious way, even with these great ones. We can for instance reposit contentedly in the criticism of Eden, or of the Bower of Bliss, without having to work out any objective iconographical significance, just as we can do with the pictures of Titian or Thorpe. Great poets and artists establish a primal reality, even though themselves, and we should not ignore this in our academic efforts to see through it and around it. Seeing through and around it affects — and can demolish — the artist as well as the critic. Why, if it is so many writers today, have given up trying to create that primal reality and have made a virtue of living among echoes?



An engraving of the American-Indian Princess Pocahontas. The portrait is taken from Liveness in Line: an anthology of Tudor and Stuart engraved portraits by Harold Barley (87pp. HMSO. £4.95. 0 11 290352 5).

Cheering up childhood

By Pat Rogers

SAMUEL F. PICKERING

John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England
286pp. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. \$21.
0 87049 290 X

It is impossible to expel John Locke from any eighteenth-century assembly. No sooner do the political theorists banish him from their presence than he emerges in another part of the ideological wood. Now it is the turn of children's literature, with an agreeable and beautifully produced book by Samuel F. Pickering acting as sponsor. There is nothing surprising in the idea that *Some Thoughts concerning Education* should have helped to expand the Georgian delights of childhood. This was, after all, the period which saw the beginning of what J. H. Plumb has called "the new world of children — a place replete with toys, games and sweets". It would seem altogether appropriate that this unthreatening landscape should be ushered in by the writer who pointed out that children "are very sensible of praise and commendation", and who shrewdly advised, "they should seldom be put about doing even those things you have got an inclination in them to, but when they have a mind and disposition to it".

In the event, Professor Pickering is least convincing at the very centre (or what should be the centre) of his book — on Locke himself. He is pretty woolly on the association of ideas; he is saddled with a thesis when he really wants to get down to an old-fashioned survey. There is no awareness of Plumb's work in the field, and the argument is awkwardly poised between chronological and topical arrangement. Finally, to get all the demerits cleared away at once, there are some odd literary judgments. Can one really say that *Pamela* is "a little the offspring of Fielding's sprawling novels" Tom Jones and *Joseph Andrews*, which it resembles structurally? Or that "Wordsworth began to sentimentalize the peasant and write poems in which meetings with Cumberland beggars and old leech-gatherers led to euphoric experiences"? Mary Woll-

stonecraft's *Mary* is not truly a "novel for adolescent girls", though it concerns them; and Dr Primrose does not meet John Newbery "at the Wells" but on the road afterwards.

It is important to get these reservations out of the way, because plenty that is absorbing remains. On the level of a survey, the book has much to tell us about Isaac Watts and Sarah Trimmer, Mrs Barbauld and the Edgeworths, Hannah More and of course Newbery himself. *Goody Two-Shoes* appears all the more amiable after prolonged exposure to the evangelical backlash. The book is a pleasure to read, and a good understanding of chapbook literature. It is informative on such topics as scriptural abridgements; natural theology as it affects Wordsworth amongst others; and, as a supplement to the Opies, on magical stories before the full flowering of the classic fairy tale.

Pickering writes with gusto and good humour, and even his lapses into the whimsical and flowery go no offence. The text is stuffed with apt and amusing quotations. There is the story in Maria Edgeworth, where all the heroine's graces vanish before her lover's startled gaze, as she crushes a small green caterpillar on a leaf. Mrs Barbauld is endlessly entertaining, and could stock an entire edition of *Quote . . . Unquote* without any aid. Her solemn inquiry as to whether poetry ought to be lowered to the capacities of children is just about wine the prize. Elsewhere we learn of *The Life and Adventures of a Fly*, a post-Sturgeson comedy in which Fickie Lovebottom rescues a fly on the grounds that "perhaps, papa, this poor fly has a father, or a mother, or a brother, or a sister, who would have been grieved even to death, had he not returned to them." And we are told of the anachronistic illustrations to biblical paraphrases, as when "a full-aged British merchantman stood off shore in the background of the plate which showed Jonah's (escape)".

There exist deeper treatments of some of the topics raised here, on Rousseau, for example; and the Locke connection is certainly not very rigorously established. But there is much else in compensation, and it would take an un-Georgian enthusiasm to refuse these delights.

The limits of partiality

By Thomas Nagel

BERNARD WILLIAMS:

Moral Luck
Philosophical Papers 1973-1980
173pp. Cambridge University Press.
£16.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 24372 6

Over the past decade Bernard Williams has attacked the objectivity of ethics with mounting intensity. He denies that ethics can tell us the truth about what to do and how to live by discovering principles that are revealed when we regard our lives and our societies not from a subjective or individual standpoint but from a detached, impartial one. Such a standpoint would be the analogue in the domain of choice and action of the objectivity pursued in science by detachment from each individual's perception of the world. Scientific detachment enables us to form a conception of how the world is in itself, rather than how it looks from here — or even how it generally appears to creatures like us.

The strongest analogue would be the position that ethical judgments are about an external moral reality, as astronomy is about an external physical reality; but Williams denies much more than this. He denies that there can be any universal principles of conduct that must recommend themselves even internally to all rational human beings, however different their personal feelings, ambitions, and attachments. He denies it because ethics, if it is to have a real bearing on action, must engage the will, and he believes that motivation starts from and is limited by a set of desires and sentiments that varies greatly from person to person, and even within one person over time. This theoretical issue about the objectivity of ethics is intimately connected with the more immediate question, how complete a submission morality can demand of us. Williams is prepared to offer stiff resistance. He rejects both the utilitarian position that we are required to live in a way that will promote the welfare of everyone impartially, and the Kantian position that we are required to live in accordance with principles that could be endorsed impartially as standards that everyone must follow. And he has serious doubts about how viable or important morality is in any form.

Seen from the view *sub specie aeternitatis* was already marked in his contribution to *Utilitarianism For and Against*, published in 1973; (his fellow-author, J. J. C. Smart, was *for*). The thirteen essays collected in *Moral Luck* have appeared since then, and they form an extremely interesting book, the product of fine philosophical intelligence and irreverent temperament concentrated on difficult and unavoidable problems. Williams writes vividly and with force, and manages to treat abstract questions together with problems of actual life in a way that makes their connections stand out. A few of the pieces are slight or too quickly written, but altogether it is an important collection. Though its central thesis is in my opinion false, anyone interested in the current state of moral philosophy must pay attention to this book.

While most of the essays are about ethics, two of the strongest are about objectivity and realism outside of ethics, a topic that also receives penetrating treatment in his *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (1978). Williams has thus been concerned generally with the question of how far outside ourselves we can and should try to get, in thought and action. But his treatment of morality is not the consequence of a broader scepticism: he is not among that incompressible large number of philosophers who currently deny the objectivity of factual and scientific knowledge. His attack on what he regards as excessive pretensions in ethics are specific to it, and depend on its claim to a role in individual life.

The transcendent impulse in ethical theory comes out both in claims

about the universal content of morality and in claims about its supreme authority over our lives. Williams challenges both these claims, (whether in the utilitarian or in their Kantian forms), but he is unsure how to divide his opposition between the two. A challenge with respect to content would say that any morality must be grounded in the dominant attitudes and feelings of the person whose morality it is and therefore cannot be impersonal. A challenge with respect to authority would say that because morality is grounded in only some of our motives, it should sometimes be overridden by others that are more important to us: not just motives of self-interest, but altruistic concern for particular persons, or the commitment to achieve or pursue some special project or aim. (The "should" here doesn't express a moral judgment, obviously.)

The ambivalence appears, for instance, in the title essay, which deals with the question whether actions can be assessed retroactively in virtue of outcomes that were not and could not have been foreseen with certainty in advance. Can we determine whether what we have done is justified or not, and if so, is that a truth internal to morality or a limitation on it? Williams argues that it is not possible always to act in such a way that one will have no reason to reproach oneself, whatever happens: "The perspective of deliberative choice on one's life is constitutively from here. Correspondingly the perspective of assessment with greater knowledge is necessarily from there, and not only can I not guarantee how factually it will then be, but I cannot ultimately guarantee from what standpoint of assessment the moral and most fundamental regrets will be." If there is no timelessly valid external standpoint of evaluation, I cannot even claim that my present choice is objectively right relative to my current beliefs about the likelihood of various outcomes.

Williams discusses the example of Gauguin, or someone like him, who abandons his family to pursue his art, and who will be able to regard the choice retroactively as justified if, and only if, he turns out to be a great artist. "The project in the interests of which the decision is made is one with which the agent is identified in such a way that if it succeeds, his standpoint of assessment will be from a life which then derives its importance from its significance for him, for that very fact; if he fails, it can, necessarily, have no such significance in his life."

This seems to imply relativity to point of view in the content of moral judgments. But are such assessments moral at all? Williams says that the fact that Gauguin can't use them to justify himself to his family doesn't show that they are not. In general, he believes, the moral justification of one person's action need not silence the complaints of others to have been wronged by it. (This is also taken up in the essay "Politics and Moral Character", which is about the problem of dirty hands.) But here he is drawn to the different view that though Gauguin is not morally justified by success, his moral luck consists in his life to morality: he would for moral reasons have had to regret what he did if he had failed, but those moral reasons are swamped, for him and also for us if not for his family, by all those paintings. And that depends on the luck of turning out to be a great artist. Williams concludes that for such reasons we reject the authority of any morality that claims to tell us what would be right however things turn out: we will be left with a morality less important than ours is usually taken to be. I myself should prefer to say that Gauguin was justified by his success, but that this justification, though probably not moral, was not simply a product of his later standpoint either, but was something more objective.

The dominance of impersonal principles is also attacked in the well-known essay "Persons, Character, and Morality", from which I shall mention two points. Williams argues against Charles Fried that it is a mistake to want a justification for saving one's wife rather than a stranger from drowning — instead of flipping a coin, in an either/or situation. He objects that if the rescuer thinks it is permissible to save his wife, that gives him "one thought too many". In the same essay, Williams claims that there may be certain ground projects in a person's life which are a condition of his wanting to go on living at all, and that it cannot be reasonable to demand that he give up such projects in the name of an impartial morality, whether utilitarian or Kantian — presumably because if he leaves the scene, the morality can have no hold on him.

This is an audacious and rather original form of motivational blackmail: "If I have to serve the greatest good of the greatest number or the categorical imperative I might as well be dead!" It is a claim few people could make without bluffing. While the demands of some forms of impersonal morality on individual motivation do seem excessive, it is much harder than Williams makes out simply to deny jurisdiction to the impersonal standpoint with regard to our most fundamental feelings and commitments.

The man who plunges into the waves to save his wife will not have Kantian or rule-utilitarian arguments running through his head, but that need not prevent him from having something to say in retrospect; if only to himself, which justifies not having done anything to inhibit the natural impulse of extreme partiality. (Suppose he had a somewhat better chance of rescuing the stranger? It is the same thought that he would need to deal with a case in which the tables were turned, and his wife drowned because the only available rescuer was not he but another man who, rescued his own wife instead. Perhaps Williams would say that in that case anything but pure grief would be indecent, but I believe most of us are impelled to try to lead our personal lives and form our basic aims in a way that can be reconciled with an impersonal standpoint from which everyone is judged alike.)

It is one of our standpoints, after all: an important part of what makes us human. And if partiality is to have any limits, they must be set from outside. The difficulty is to achieve some kind of integrity in human life without either overwhelming its personal core with a pervasive impartiality or bulldozing the impersonal standpoint in the name of what one personally must

do. Both these reactions to the problem Williams so vividly poses have the flavour of reactions to oneself: on the one hand guilt about the personal and selfish; on the other hand rebellion against the impersonal admonitions of conscience. The discovery of an alternative that we can live by I take to be the task of ethical theory.

Williams believes there cannot be such a thing as ethical theory, for nothing so purportedly universal could explain by what right it legislates to the moral sentiments in "internal and external reasons" he sets forth the position that all reasons a person can have for doing or wanting anything must derive by deliberative reasoning from his subjective motivational set, which is simply a given for any person at a time, though it may change. If there were such things as external reasons, which held for all rational persons independently of the details of their motivational sets, they would have to be reachable, to the point of becoming motivationally effective, by some rational process other than the ordinary deliberative one of drawing practical conclusions from existing motives. "I see no reason to suppose," says Williams, "that these conditions could possibly be met."

I see no reason to suppose that they couldn't. Williams himself is prepared to allow that "there is essential indeterminacy in what can be counted a rational deliberative process". And he thinks reasoning can sometimes lead to changes in the motivational set. Why can't there be, as different defenders of impartial morality have thought, a form of insight about our non-unique places in the world which leads us to acknowledge that we should live in a way we can endorse from outside, and for everyone similarly situated, as well as from within? What form that reason would take and how dominant it would be are further questions. But why isn't putting oneself in other people's shoes a genuine form of reasoning?

Allowing such regulative authority to the impartial view need not imply the neglect or suppression of those personal feelings, attachments, projects, and individualities of character that Williams so rightly emphasizes. In "Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence" he says that even if the aim of objective knowledge is to dissociate thought about the world from what is distinctively oneself, and perhaps from anything that is distinctively human, "that cannot be the aim of moral thought and experience, which must primarily involve grasping the world in such a way that

one can, as a particular human being, live in it". This is absolutely right, but it seems to me to set the main task for ethical theory rather than to provide a reason to give it up.

The same essay deals subtly and convincingly with the charge that those who reject certain means to the achievement of the best overall consequences must be guilty of moral self-indulgence. Williams acknowledges that such self-indulgence can exist, but locates it in a reflexive concern with one's own virtue, of which a utilitarian may be as guilty as anyone else. He has no sympathy for this, but a great deal of respect for the less self-conscious phenomenon of moral character, which makes it impossible or difficult or necessary for a person to do certain things, even though he may be unable to supply reasons that provide universal justification. This is important for the moral virtues, and it is one of the reasons that conflicts of value cannot always be smoothed out by reducing them to a common rational basis and adding up the components.

In "Conflicts of Values" Williams makes the related point that, in a context of shared moral sentiment, the fact that a further reason is not needed to support a moral distinction (between, say, abortion and infanticide) does not mean that the distinction is irrational. "You can't think that, it's a child's more convincing as a reason than any reason which might be advanced for its being a reason." This seems right, but it also seems compatible with the possibility of later criticism or justification.

"The Truth in Relativism" claims that we cannot morally appraise as right or wrong systems of moral belief which stand in purely "national" as opposed to "real" confrontation with our own: ie, systems which, while inconsistent with our own, are not real options for us. Williams gives as examples the life and outlook of a Greek Bronze Age child, or of a medieval Samurai, asserting that they "lack the relation to our concerns which alone gives any point and substance to appraisal". This is a severely restricted relativism, but the reference to "point and substance" provides no independent argument for it. If there were, contrary to Williams's conviction, such a thing as moral objectivity, then there might not be much point but there would certainly be substance in the moral appraisal of Pharaonic slavery, even though it is not a real option for us.

I cannot do justice here to the final essays, "Wittgenstein and Idealism" and "Another Time, Another Place, Another Person". The former is the best treatment I know of the question to what extent Wittgenstein's later writing expresses a transcendental idealism of the first-person plural; using a we that is the plural descendant of the idealist I. The world then is not my world but our world. Williams finds such a view in the later Wittgenstein, together with a problem present also in the *Tractatus*, of how to express it without talking nonsense (by saying, for example, that the truths of mathematics depend on our decisions).

The latter essay demonstrates brilliantly the incoherence in positivism and its heirs which comes from trying to wed verificationist empiricism, with its emphasis on the human perspective, to a scientific world-view that seeks a representation of the world not from here or from any other particular perspective. Note, this is a mirror image of the attack on the Kantian fusion of impersonal detachment with the basic moral aim of guiding individual life inside the world.

Moral Luck is an arresting book. Williams is a provocative and stimulating writer, and the leading contemporary disparager of transcendental ambitions in moral philosophy. In attacking those ambitions, and in doubting the preeminent importance of morality, Williams is at the beating heart of the subject. It matters whether he is right.

John Mole

Trees at the Frontier

Shrugging great-coats off
They turn their backs on each other,
Rooted in common earth
But not a leaf between them.

Not a bird either.
Too much has tugged here
For the worm of history, too many cold dawns
Stripping down to this . . .

Wind in their poor forked branches
Is a siren's echo, rain
A mother's lament in exile
Under frozen skies,

And one more army
Will not settle the matter —
Like the first leaves of autumn
Its blood spreads at their feet.

They have forgotten the seasons.
They are naked in their shame.
They will have nothing to do with this
Even when spring returns.

one can, as a particular human being, live in it". This is absolutely right, but it seems to me to set the main task for ethical theory rather than to provide a reason to give it up.

The same essay deals subtly and convincingly with the charge that those who reject certain means to the achievement of the best overall consequences must be guilty of moral self-indulgence. Williams acknowledges that such self-indulgence can exist, but locates it in a reflexive concern with one's own virtue, of which a utilitarian may be as guilty as anyone else. He has no sympathy for this, but a great deal of respect for the less self-conscious phenomenon of moral character, which makes it impossible or difficult or necessary for a person to do certain things, even though he may be unable to supply reasons that provide universal justification. This is important for the moral virtues, and it is one of the reasons that conflicts of value cannot always be smoothed out by reducing them to a common rational basis and adding up the components.

In "Conflicts of Values" Williams makes the related point that, in a context of shared moral sentiment, the fact that a further reason is not needed to support a moral distinction (between, say, abortion and infanticide) does not mean that the distinction is irrational. "You can't think that, it's a child's more convincing as a reason than any reason which might be advanced for its being a reason." This seems right, but it also seems compatible with the possibility of later criticism or justification.

"The Truth in Relativism" claims that we cannot morally appraise as right or wrong systems of moral belief which stand in purely "national" as opposed to "real" confrontation with our own: ie, systems which, while inconsistent with our own, are not real options for us. Williams gives as examples the life and outlook of a Greek Bronze Age child, or of a medieval Samurai, asserting that they "lack the relation to our concerns which alone gives any point and substance to appraisal". This is a severely restricted relativism, but the reference to "point and substance" provides no independent argument for it. If there were, contrary to Williams's conviction, such a thing as moral objectivity, then there might not be much point but there would certainly be substance in the moral appraisal of Pharaonic slavery, even though it is not a real option for us.

I cannot do justice here to the final essays, "Wittgenstein and Idealism" and "Another Time, Another Place, Another Person". The former is the best treatment I know of the question to what extent Wittgenstein's later writing expresses a transcendental idealism of the first-person plural; using a we that is the plural descendant of the idealist I. The world then is not my world but our world. Williams finds such a view in the later Wittgenstein, together with a problem present also in the *Tractatus*, of how to express it without talking nonsense (by saying, for example, that the truths of mathematics depend on our decisions).

The latter essay demonstrates brilliantly the incoherence in positivism and its heirs which comes from trying to wed verificationist empiricism, with its emphasis on the human perspective, to a scientific world-view that seeks a representation of the world not from here or from any other particular perspective. Note, this is a mirror image of the attack on the Kantian fusion of impersonal detachment with the basic moral aim of guiding individual life inside the world.

Moral Luck is an arresting book. Williams is a provocative and stimulating writer, and the leading contemporary disparager of transcendental ambitions in moral philosophy. In attacking those ambitions, and in doubting the preeminent importance of morality, Williams is at the beating heart of the subject. It matters whether he is right.

Delving into paradox

By John Sturrock

ROBERT PINGET:
Monsieur Songe
138pp. Paris: Minuit

A "divertissement" Robert Pinget calls this, something "écrit à l'aveugle" over twenty years in the breaks from elaborating the prodigious chronicle of Agapè, Fantoline and their feverishly taunting natives. For him a "divertissement", for us more or less pure Pinget. Like his other writings, these minor scenes from the life of Monsieur Songe are both ordinary and portentous. Monsieur Songe is a man in retirement, well placed, with a villa, a garden, a view of the sea, a niece, and a housekeeper whom he doesn't much like and who has the dubious name of Sosie (or "double"). Thus freed from chores, he is able to worry interestingly over the tedium of his days, especially his winter days when the lack of anything absorbing to look at elsewhere forces him to look inward, to himself. He is troubled by the big question of whether or not his life has some *bien-fondé*. If it has, it can only be his writing – the regular entries which he makes in his journal, immortalizing the odder thoughts that have come to him. These alone promise him a small memorial among the living once he is no longer of their number, and Monsieur Songe does not seem to relish his eventual subtraction from the human sum.

He is uncomfortably self-con-

scious. Long past are the innocent days when he could act spontaneously and do things without observing himself doing them, or asking why he was doing them. He no longer has need of other people to condition his behaviour by their presence, because he is unremotely present to himself. His writing is the conversation of an unsociable man, as well as the one mark of his lurking idiosyncrasy – that part of him which is still untamed by his otherwise immaculate conformism. The caprices of Monsieur Songe's mind are the stuff of his journal, and his journal is the stuff of Monsieur Songe. What we read is what he writes as he ponders the dark connection between his love of words and his love for people. Do these go together, he asks himself, or could he not train himself to love words and people? Monsieur Songe writes, it becomes clear, in self-defence: to preserve the remnants of his singularity.

He is at once an appealingly crochety character and an uneasy projection of Pinget himself. Monsieur Songe justifies his life by his writing as, one takes it, Pinget would justify his. But where Songe's scribbles are an escape from nothing very much, Pinget's are an escape from another, more serious (?) kind of writing. Pinget uses Songe to ruminate with a measure of impersonality on the lot and the needs of the writer, delving wittily but at the same time searching into the paradoxes of authorship. When it comes to self-analysis Songe/Pinget is a master casuist.

La grande difficulté quand on écrit son journal dit Monsieur Songe

Extravagant obsessions

By David Gascoyne

GUY DUPRÉ:
Le Grand Coucheur
268pp. Paris: La Table Ronde.

Guy Dupré's first novel, *Les Fleurs sont froides*, set in the early nineteenth century, inspired Albert Béguin to devote a laudatory article to it in the review *Esprit*. *Le Grand Coucheur*, his second book, will undoubtedly have enhanced his reputation among perceptive critics. M. Dupré's principal *donnée* is an imaginary attempt to assimilate, de Gaulle and the year, during which the action takes place is significantly, that of the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Verdun.

The principal character, the memorably extravagant colonel de Sainte-Rose, who eventually emerges as the instigator of a plan for the ultimate disposal of the head of state, is shown to be animated first and last by an obsessive desire to avenge at one blow those of his high-ranking predecessors whom he regards as having been victims of politico-military intrigue during the concluding phase of the First World War, and at the same time his "brethren" in Military Intelligence who seem to him to have in their turn become victims – on this occasion due to the infamous policy of the General Staff. The first of the novel's twelve chapters is entitled: *Un petit berger de sa venger sur un quai la Clotie des Armes à l'air*; and it opens with a mordantly witty presentation of the phenomenon described by the author as the *feu des armes*, constituting in effect a brief analysis of the role played in French military annals by the legitimate, quasi-traditional shedding of mainly tears at appropriate historical moments. It is implicit that involvement with uniformed historians of this nature is all of a piece with the reverentially minute preservation in Sainte-Rose's milieu of every detail of the Dreyfus Affair.

This is evoked at the first crucial moment in the book's development, when Sainte-Rose makes his first appearance, in suitably dubious circumstances, and then unwittingly

leads the narrator subsequently to associate the mysterious Constance, the only woman character in the story and the third side of a conventional though tenuous triangle, with the Church of Sainte-Clotilde, which is found to have a special connection with the Dreyfus case. And from the very start, in the *Eglise des Soldats* which gives the first chapter its title, we are offered a constant supply of telling historical background details, many of them marked by an asterisk referring to the dozen or so pages of *Appendices* to be found at the end. The Imperial mystique of Bonaparte still emanating from Les Invalides constitutes the first of the elements contributing to the special sort of tradition which is in a sense the novel's subject.

We realize from the outset that the tale the novel proposes to tell must inevitably involve futility and anti-climax. The teller is an appropriately characterless character, who is desultorily preparing to write a book about the career of General Mangin. Only an obsessively erudite curiosity regarding the minutiae of backstage politico-military history can be thought to suggest any sort of similarity with the author, who uses him as a convenient facade. Similarly Constance, if "mysterious" only by virtue of possessing the sort of fabled inscrutability most often cultivated by those devoid of authentic inwardness, although she does in fact possess a secret necessary to the plot. However, the author scrupulously avoids all overt ethical inference. The most suitable term to suggest his dominant, albeit "irony", though in Dupré's case this is not so all-pervasively corrosive as in, say, Mosall's treatment of the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Though his belittling narrative is apparently no more than an idle and accidentally implicated observer, Dupré himself is capable of a degree of dissimulated compassion for the characters that most concern him, even if they emerge ostensibly as embodiments of resentment, frustrated vanity and self-dramatization.

Le Grand Coucheur belongs to a domain verging on what is most often referred to as "fiction", and its documentary interest is exceptional. But what ought to be emphasized at the same time is that this essay in

fictionalized documentation is written with a rare combination of skill and panache. Possibly it represents a reaction increasingly to be found among younger writers against the deliberately neutral and commonplace style cultivated by many of the exponents of the *nouveau roman*, and if Guy Dupré can be taught to indicate a new trend in French fiction towards polish and elegance, such a tendency should properly be regarded more as a temptation than as a reversal. *Le Grand Coucheur* combines subtly, wit and density of allusion; it is an exhilarating and absorbing work.

Watching for wit

By Julian Symons

CHAPMAN PINCHER:
The Private World of St John Terrapin
A Novel of the Café Royal
332pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £7.95, 0 283 98849 5

A novel? Not exactly, but not a memoir either. A more accurate subtitle might be: *A Recipe for Using the Words and Words of Other Writers Without Resort to Plagiarism*. Taking the Domino Room (later the Brasserie) of the Café Royal as a background, Chapman Pincher relates the lives of many writers and artists who used it. Whistler, Wilde and Douglas; Beethoven and Beethoven; Chesterton, Belloc and Shaw; both Lawrence, Marie Lloyd, Lillie Langtry, Nancy Cunard, Horatio Bottomley, Augustus John – the list is by no means exhaustive, although the Nineties are the most important period, and Wilde the most conspicuous figure.

The account is said to have been compiled from the diaries of St John Terrapin, who went totally deaf at an early age, and became an expert lip-reader. He is thus able to repeat conversations that in the novel take place at the other end of the Domino Room, and often did not

By Peter Lewis

TIMOTHY MO:
Sour Sweet
252pp. André Deutsch. £7.95, 0 233 97365 6

Part of the considerable appeal of Timothy Mo's first novel, *The Monkey King* (1978), lay in the novelty of its subject. Even though we are now accustomed to talking about "Literature in English" rather than "English Literature" in order to acknowledge the contributions being made by Commonwealth writers, English-language writing about Hong Kong remains extremely rare. John Le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* used Hong Kong as a setting for the activities of Westerners, in the manner of Conrad and Greene. Mo, on the other hand, presented Chinese society from the inside, maintaining an amused detachment from the Poon family at the centre of the novel while generating considerable sympathy for several of its members. *The Monkey King* was frequently comic without being a comic novel, and claims that Mo was doing for Hong Kong what V. S. Naipaul had done for Trinidad in his early novels were almost inevitable.

In his second novel, with the punning title of *Sour Sweet*, Mo again concentrates on Chinese society, though on this occasion the setting is not the Far East but England in the 1960s, when peculiarly oriental forms of gang warfare rooted in the notorious Triad Societies were still occurring among the Chinese community. Mo writes about a world within a world, that of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong who are intent on retaining their national and cultural identity while being economically dependent on their host country in various ways, both legal and illegal. As in *The Monkey King*, Mo provides us with an inside view of an unfamiliar social milieu, but by placing the narrative firmly in London he achieves a new *raison d'être*. What is startling is the apparent discrepancy between location and action, between modern England and a largely self-contained and alien society functioning within it.

The main plot of *Sour Sweet* concerns the small family unit of Chen, his wife Lily, their young son Man Kee, Lily's sister Mui, and (in the later stages) Mui's illegitimate daugh-

ter and Chen's father. Mo traces the fortunes of this family over several years, during which Chen gives up his job as a waiter in a Soho restaurant, sets up his own "take away" business in suburbia. Mo depicts the family relationships and tensions with a delicate balance between comic distance and emotional involvement. While being far too sympathetic for satire, Mo's treatment of the Chen household, as he charts their attempts to establish a *modus vivendi* with what they regard as an inferior and relatively uncivilized people, is often humorous; misunderstandings and cultural collisions abound.

Yet for all the comedy, the final effect is far from comic. Intertwoven with the narrative concerning the Chens is another about the operations of one of the Triad Societies in London, the Hung Family, which bears a strong resemblance to the Mafia. In addition to its protection rackets and drug trafficking, the Family is engaged in a power struggle with a similar organization, and this sometimes erupts into incidents of murderous brutality. For all its ritualistic and idealistic rhetoric, the Hung Family is a thoroughly debased and corrupt organization, and it is Chen's misfortune to come into direct contact with it briefly when he urgently needs money. Subsequently Chen goes to great lengths to keep as much distance between himself and the Family as possible. There is therefore a grim irony in the unexpected and arbitrary way the Family finally eliminates him, not because he has committed a punishable offence but because he is a suitably innocent scapegoat needed by one faction in an inter-cine power struggle.

Mo excels in handling domestic situations, relationships between men and women in families, and the subtle manoeuvrings by which women control their men while maintaining the appearance of subservience: he has a very sharp eye indeed for the nuances of behaviour in close-knit social units. By comparison, his treatment of the Hung Family is more superficial; the main participants in the Family are stereotypes. The opening pattern of alternate chapters devoted to the Chens and to the Hung Family is soon abandoned and the main focus of interest becomes the Chen household. Yet even the Chen narrative would have benefited from some tightening up. Mo needs to beware of too leisurely a mode of narration.

Auberon, Waugh has written a characteristically perceptive introduction to the *Sour Sweet* Society's production of the 1983 edition with the Leech illustrations in colour. Virginia Blain – intrepid woman – did her B Lit on Surtees and has produced a scholarly edition of *Sponge*, collating the text of the new *Monthly* serial version with the 1853 text and providing explanatory notes. These are needed to understand hunting terms and to get the full flavour of Surtees's slang and dislocated dialogue. Surtees is the only Victorian novelist to reproduce convincingly working-class speech.

Ms Blain cannot have been helped by the Bodleian Library whose holdings on the blood sports – the main

take place there at all. Memoirs and biographies are used in plenty – those of Frank Harris, Alfred Douglas, Beethoven, Rothstein, John Epstein and many others are pressed into service without acknowledgement. As Pincher says in a demure foreword: "Many of the statements (St John Terrapin) deciphered from the lips of Oscar Wilde eventually appeared in that writer's plays and books", and "the same may have happened with other Café Royal habitués, for many of them, as we know, were writers." Thus, Whistler's "It is a touch of vulgarity that makes the whole world kin", a remark made in his lecture "Ten O'Clock", is transferred to the Domino Room where he makes it to Wilde in talking about Lillie Langtry. A discussion between Harris, Shaw, Wilde and Douglas, about the wisdom of Wilde's proceeding against the Marquis of Queensberry, did take place in the Café Royal, and it is taken, however, from Harris's biography of Wilde, with a few unhappy additions such as Harris's remark to Shaw that "the pen is mightier than the pen, or even the sword". The dialogue additions are almost always unfortunate, whether Wilde is "saying that he must give himself maximum exposure", or Belloc is remarking that different kinds of drink are "all alcohol to me".

One might adapt one of Whistler's remarks to Wilde in relation to Pincher's borrowings of witty phrases: "A fine thing, Chapman; but not, I suppose, your own." The phrases, to be sure, are supposed to be those heard, or rather seen, by St John Terrapin who is, however, a mask for Chapman Pincher. The book is full of good stories, many of them well and smoothly told, but the seemed even better when they came at first hand in memoirs and autobiographies. The deafness device is extremely ingenious, and the ethics of its use are a matter for Pincher. The stories have all appeared before, and to put them between one pair of covers and embody them in a fictional memoir can certainly not be called plagiarism.

There are some minor errors in the specialized field of one reviewer's cognizance. Conan Doyle's "Illustrious Client" was not a novel but a short story, and the author had not "made a considerable name for himself" at the time of the Ripper murders, but was almost unknown. Wilde was not married in 1892, as is implied, but in May 1894. Bottomley's photograph was not "forever in the newspapers and magazines" in 1896 when he too was unknown to the general public, and so far from his magazine *John Bull* expiring after a single issue, it appeared weekly for fifteen months. But St John Terrapin spent so much time in the Domino Room that it is no wonder his scholarly research did not equal his skill in lip reading.

Foes of the fox

By Raymond Carr

R. S. SURTEES:

Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour
480pp. with 14 colour plates. Available from the Hon Secretary, Surtees Society, Craddock Close, Craddock, Nr Culmpton, Devon. £12.95 including postage.
Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour
Edited by Virginia Blain
480pp. Batsford. £12.50.
0 7134 4311 1

Addition to blood sports as subject-matter for a novelist does not provide a secure foundation for a literary reputation. In the fox-hunting world Surtees has always had a band of faithful followers much given to quoting Mr Jorrocks's *obiter dicta*. But to judge from the number of D Phil theses devoted to his works and the brief article in the *DNB* which attributes his survival to Leech's illustrations, he has never made the grade with the literary establishment.

Yet Surtees was a remarkable and gifted writer who created a literary genre, short-lived it is true: sporting fiction as opposed to the tedious and pretentious sporting journalism in which he had served his apprenticeship. His eye for the eccentric anti-hero of the rural world – a world Dickens never penetrated or began to understand – is unrivalled. Mr Sponge, Facey Romford, and Mr Jorrocks are creations of genius. These gifts have been buried by prejudice: many of Surtees's works are out of print. It is a cheering thought, at the very moment when the attacks of humanitarians, loonies and lefties on fox-hunting are mounting, that two editions of *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* – in my view Surtees's best novel – have appeared.

Auberon, Waugh has written a characteristically perceptive introduction to the *Sour Sweet* Society's production of the 1853 edition with the Leech illustrations in colour. Virginia Blain – intrepid woman – did her B Lit on Surtees and has produced a scholarly edition of *Sponge*, collating the text of the new *Monthly* serial version with the 1853 text and providing explanatory notes. These are needed to understand hunting terms and to get the full flavour of Surtees's slang and dislocated dialogue. Surtees is the only Victorian novelist to reproduce convincingly working-class speech.

Ms Blain cannot have been helped by the Bodleian Library whose holdings on the blood sports – the main

leisure occupation of the ruling classes from Anglo-Saxon times to the First World War – are appalling.

Construction was not Surtees's strong point. The *Sporting Tour* is a series of episodes strung on the hunting adventures of its anti-hero. Sponge was "not what the lower orders call the real gentleman"; his sole intellectual achievement is the mastery of *Magg's Cat Pares of London*. But he is a superb and brave rider and a keen fox-hunter. He exploits respect for the red coat and its suggestion of wealth to impose on provincial snobs and insinuate himself into house after house. "His dexterity in getting into people's houses was only equalled by the difficulty of getting him out again." The variety of Sponge's hosts allows Surtees to draw a picture of provincial agricultural society of the mid century, a picture singularly neglected by social historians, so great is the aversion of intellectuals to the killing of foxes in what they imagine to be, as the great radical Cobden called it, a "feudal" sport – a notion that a few pages of Surtees would dispel. Jorrocks, after all, is a Cockney grocer.

Surtees wrote anonymously. Is this, paradoxically, the reason for the force with which his personality comes through on every page? His view of human nature was Hobbesian. The acerbity of his social comment, Mr Waugh suggests, was the product of his early hard life when he experienced an "exile from Eden which was the lot of all younger sons born into the landed classes".

I rather think it was the bitterness of a country gentleman who saw his world invaded by "pursue proud parvenus" sucking up to an aristocracy that had lost its sense of values. Yet Surtees was no romantic conservative but a practical man interested in railways and field drainage. Only by facing up to the world could his class and his values survive. The Squire of Hamsterley had little sympathy for the small farmer who could not afford the agricultural improvements that were Surtees's obsession; such weaklings "must go like weasels to the wall".

It is the lack of sentimentality of any kind that distinguishes Surtees. Lord Scampardale is a boorish MFH, who lives on cow leas and trips with his penitence crony Jack Spraggon whom he exploits mercilessly. Scampardale is genuinely moved when poor Jack is killed in a steeplechase. But "when a lord is in distress, consolation is never long in coming". No one in *Mr Sponge* is admirable: Jawleyford, for example, is a bogus gent who screws his tenants and who, once he realizes that Sponge is a penniless adventurer, determines to

get rid of him by bad claret, watered port and smoking chimneys. Facey Romford is a near criminal boor who plays excruciating jigs on the flute.

Women come off no better than the men. Surtees has a whole gallery of ambitious mothers and intriguing daughters. To pretend that the Victorian marriage market had anything to do with affection was hypocrisy: in this world of sordid competition, losing a man was "like losing a fox after digging him out". His gallery of thieves, dirty servants is truly appalling. George Orwell detected in Kipling – one of Surtees's few literary admirers – a "streak of sadism". It is not absent in Surtees. His antisemitism, for instance, is ferocious and overt.

What, then, can save a man – or woman? Physical courage, professionalism in the form of a knowledgeable enthusiasm for fox hunting can go a long way. This is the saving grace of Sponge and his fellow rogue Facey Romford; it redeems Mr Jorrocks. Conversely, it is the use of fox-hunting for social climbing that is the cardinal sin: Mr Puffington, son of a starch manufacturer, could never get over Elton and Christ Church; "fat, fair and rather more than forty", he took over a pack of hounds "because he thought they would give him consequence". His ignorance, is, of course, ruthlessly exploited by his pretentious and expensive huntsman and the crowd of sycophants who devour his dinners. Sir Henry Scatterash, surrounded by drunks and actresses of easy virtue – his house, a child says at a disastrous lawn meet, is not to be visited because it is "full of trumpets" – does not take hunting seriously. His seedy hangers-on are determined to keep Sponge from joining their game. "There are no people so anxious to protect others from robbery as those who are robbing them themselves," a sentence that might have come out of Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

It is the vitality, the energy of Surtees's style, his visual realism – his obsession with the minutiae of clothes is its most unfortunate manifestation – that makes his odd world live. The puzzle remains. Why did Surtees, a conscientious and reserved Durham JP and landowner, write at all? I think, like another hunting novelist Trollope (though Trollope's descriptions of runs are dramatically more exciting, they are technically so to speak, inferior) writing was a self-imposed discipline to ward off an all-encompassing melancholia. Or was it that the habit, acquired as a young man in hack journalism, persisted in the squire as a drug when it was no longer needed as a source of income?

medium of successive masters and their circles and on these subjects they may have been no wiser than he.

The book's title is puzzling. "Quist", I find, is another word for a wood pigeon, which does nothing to lighten my darkness. In most other respects, however, this is a refreshing and informative book, a social document of permanent value as well as a good read.

The Country Divine, edited by Michael Brander (210pp. The Saint Andrew Press, 121 George Street, Edinburgh. £3.90. 0 7132 0492 0) is a collection of extracts from the diaries of twelve rural clergymen in England, Scotland and Wales. The extracts are arranged chronologically to cover a period from the time of the Revd Ralph Josselin (1616-1683) to that of the Revd Francis Kilvert (1840-1879). And the "parishes" described range from Strath Naver in the Highlands to Canterton in Somerset. There are extracts from the journals of well known figures, such as William Cole, James Woodforde and Kilvert; as well as the less well known family of Sages, three eighteenth-century Highland ministers. The volume contains an introduction on the history of the country divine, a list of further reading and photographs of the places where the diaries lived and wrote.

It is hardly surprising that his views on wildlife are more perceptive than his views on politics. He has seen wildlife for what it is. Politics – he follows the conservative banner – he has comprehended through the

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The winner in Whitehall

By Michael Carver

DAVID FRASER:
Alanbrooke
604pp, Collins, £12.95.
0 00 216360 8

Nearly twenty years after his death, justice has at last been done to the man whom General MacArthur, not one to lavish praise on other generals, described as "undoubtedly the greatest soldier that England has produced since Wellington" (in fact both Wellington and Alanbrooke came from the Protestant ascendancy of Ireland). Alanbrooke's reputation, at its height at the end of the Second World War, for most of which he had been Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, suffered from the publication of his diaries, edited by Sir Arthur Bryant as *The Turn of the Tide* in 1957 and *Triumph of the West* two years later. It was ironic that this should have been so, for as Bryant explains in a lengthy epilogue to David Fraser's book, the aim of those two books, fully approved by Alanbrooke, was to counterbalance the effect of Winston Churchill's six-volume history of *The Second World War*, which had portrayed the Prime Minister as the faultless director of the war's strategy.

Unfortunately, and increasingly as the war progressed, Alanbrooke used his diary as a vehicle to release pent-up emotions resulting from the long, frustrating and, at times acrimonious arguments between Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff; these arguments often lasted late into the night, and Alanbrooke had to bear the brunt of the Prime Minister's relentless pressure. As Fraser writes:

A reader of Alanbrooke's diary and nothing else would find an emotional, hasty and intolerant man, immoderate in expression. On the contrary, in his professional dealings Alanbrooke was an excellent listener, calm, rational and persuasive.

As a general, and particularly as CIGS, he could be frightening. His quick, clear mind, steely speech, decisive, forceful manner and steady determination impressed all: superior, colleague and subordinate alike. To quote Fraser again:

To many of those who only knew him in the Army he was, or could be, forbidding although he was totally without pomposity or

affection. To those whose acquaintance or friendship was other than warm, amusing, and affectionate, [his] love of nature, of birds, of colour and beauty and the high, wild places gave him that extra dimension any good professional needs if he is to be a whole man. Alanbrooke was a great man and a whole man. He could love and be loved, as well as fight and decide. He had passion and compassion as well as strength and will. With this inside him, he needed to confide. He had to pour out his feelings, hopes, fears, hates and frustrations. He needed to do so to someone he loved and to do so every day.

This he did, in the Second World War, to his second wife, both in his diary and a daily letter, written against all the rules of security, but to the great benefit of posterity, as Fraser's excellent book illustrates.

The clarity and incisiveness of Alanbrooke's mind, and his ability to approach problems, military and other, with open-minded objectivity may have owed something to his upbringing and education, which was not that of the typical army officer. He was the ninth, and much the youngest, child of Sir Victor Brooke, who, at the age of eleven, had inherited the baronetcy which went with the estate of Colebrooke in County Fermanagh; but his parents preferred to spend most of the year near Paul in the French Pyrenees, and it was in Bigorre that, in 1883, Alan Francis Brooke was born to Victor's beautiful wife Alice, née Bellingham, another Anglo-Irish family. Being the youngest of the family, Alan lived a self-contained life, close to nature, and his father's death, when he was only eight, drew him even closer to his mother, who was as close a confidante as, in later years, both his first and particularly his second wife were to be. His closeness to her, in contrast to Montgomery's relations with his mother or Wellington's with "La Vieille Croix", was maintained by his education at a day school in Pau, catering primarily for the sons of the British and Americans who lived there. As a result he was fluent in French and German, and avoided the stultifying influence of an English boarding school. But his visits to Colebrooke, to which his eldest brother, eighteen years older, had moved on their father's death, intro-

duced him to the sort of life which facilitated his entry into "The Shop", the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, and his subsequent commissioning into the Royal Artillery, a change of scene he took in his stride, as he did every further step up the military ladder.

In the First World War he was fortunate, like Wavell and Montgomery, to be appointed at an early age to the staff on the Western Front. In his case it was the artillery staff; first to that of the intelligent and original General Maxse, commanding the 18th Division, then to the Canadian Corps, and finally, as a 35-year-old lieutenant-colonel, to that of General Horne's First Army.

In the years between the wars he was clearly marked out as one of the army's "stars": first a student at the Staff College, and after a short interval, an instructor there; then a student on the first course at the newly established Imperial Defence College, to which he was later to return as one of the directing staff. The IDC course, on which Auchinleck was a fellow student, was followed by rapid promotion to command the School of Artillery at Salisbury Plain. Gunners, by nature and training, are traditional and conservative – the fundamentals of their trade do not change, even with the substitution of electronically operated missiles for metal tubes – and Brooke was no exception; so that his selection to command the first British "Mobile Division", the forerunner of armoured divisions, was regarded with dismay by the "Apostles of Mobility". His pragmatic and realistic appreciation of the realities of the battlefield, however, was a badly needed corrective at the time to the tank enthusiasts, who exaggerated the effect that mobility alone could achieve, tended to dismiss the value of artillery support and, without justification, regarded gunners as upholders of the ancient regime.

August 1939 saw Brooke succeeding Wavell as Commander-in-Chief of Southern Command, when the latter went to the Middle East; and when war broke out a month later, he was appointed to command one of the two army corps, the Second, in the British Expeditionary Force to France, with Montgomery as one of the divisional commanders. He described the corps as "quite unfit for war in its present state", and as the ploy was continued, his anxieties

did not lessen. He was appalled at the general state of the French army, from top to bottom, his intimate knowledge of France and the French enabling him to perceive the realities of the situation more clearly; and he had little confidence in his superior, Gort. "Brooke regarded Gort", writes Fraser, "as inadequate to his responsibilities, incapable of taking the strategic view or of recognizing the strategic peril of the situation. He was filled with foreboding and yet his Commander-in-Chief seemed determined neither to share it nor to annul it." Subsequent events in Flanders, described by the author with clarity and skill, gave Brooke a healthy respect for the professionalism of the German army, and instilled in him a determination to ensure that the British army was not again pitted against one in a situation in which it was condemned to defeat because of politicians or optimistic generals underestimated the enemy and brushed aside realities.

From the time that Brooke succeeded Dill as CIGS in December 1941, becoming also Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff three months later, this was his main preoccupation: to bring the army to a pitch at which it could fight the Germans on equal terms in respect of quality, and to see that, when it did so, the balance of strength was in its favour. He paid little attention to the war against Japan. In attempting to achieve his aim, he had to fight a war on two fronts: against Churchill's tendency both to fritter away forces on strategically unprofitable and irrelevant operations, and to disregard military logistic realities; against the Americans, who accused him, in respect of the faults which he attributed to Churchill, and thirdly against both Churchill and the Americans, when they pressed for premature commitment to action, before either the forces could be ready in sufficient strength, or the enemy worn down by action elsewhere.

The almost endless series of Anglo-American meetings on strategy revolved around this theme and they furnish the bulk of the book, Fraser's comments never failing to be perceptive, balanced and just to all involved. Although clearly a fervent admirer of his subject – grapher, he has no hesitation in pointing out when and where he is wrong, and Churchill or the Americans right, notably over strategy in the Far East in the closing stages of the war. His verdict on the controversy over Eisenhower's strategy in North-West Europe tends to favour Alanbrooke, but not without reservations. He supports Alanbrooke's consistent view that the invasion of Italy and persistence in maintaining the offensive there made an essential contribution to limiting the strength which the Germans could deploy against an invasion of France: that to have abandoned Mediterranean for the sake of an earlier amphibious assault across the Channel could have been to court disaster.

Inevitably the book tends to concentrate on grand strategy in the Second World War, and it is a brilliant contribution to its history. Because that was the be-all and end-all of Alanbrooke's life, apart from his passion for birds, the personal element of the story is apt to be repetitive, harping on his love, both of nature and of his family – his second marriage at the age of forty-six, four years after his first wife had died as the result of an accident in the car he was driving, proving a blissfully happy one.

His arguments with Churchill, and the love-hate relationship between the two men, dominated Alanbrooke's life and imposed a strain which, towards the end of the war, warped his judgment. Churchill had doubts about appointing him in the first place. "Why I thump the table," Churchill said to Nye, "and push my face towards him, what does he do? Thumps the table harder

and glares back at me – I know these Brookes – stiff-necked Ulstermen with that 'no' one worse to deal with than that." The book abounds in examples of their ding-dong battles. At one stage their relations seemed to have reached an impasse, but it was saved by the ever tactful Ismay. "Brooke must go," Churchill had said to him. "He hates me. I hate him." When Ismay told Brooke, the latter replied: "Hate him? I don't hate him. I love him. But the first time I tell him I agree with him when I don't will be the time to get rid of me, for I will be no more use to him." When Ismay relayed this to Churchill, his eyes filled with tears as he murmured: "Dear Brooke!"

Two opportunities of escape from this thralldom were offered, or seemed to be. The first was in August 1942, when Churchill offered the Middle East Command in place of Auchinleck, and the second in June 1943 when the Prime Minister told him that he had chosen him to command the cross-Channel invasion. Alanbrooke reluctantly, but undoubtedly rightly, turned down the former; but was bitterly disappointed that Churchill, also reluctantly but undoubtedly rightly, went back to his word about the latter, recognizing the political reality that overall command had to be given to the Americans.

Brooke's comments on other generals were caustic. He was devoted to Dill and Wavell, though little of Alexander's brain-power and admired Montgomery's tactical skill, while having no illusions about his lack of tact and his egotism. When the latter was in England, planning the invasion of Normandy, Brooke wrote of him: "He is making good headway in making plans and equally successful in making enemies." It is ironic and unjust that the only Second World War general commemorated by a statue outside the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall should be Montgomery, who was certainly not at his best there, while Alanbrooke, the outstanding Whitehall Warrior, has to be content with a tablet in the crypt of St Paul's.

Fraser accepts Alanbrooke's view that the higher machinery of war – the Chiefs of Staff, working directly with Churchill as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, served by a joint planning staff – was a perfect as any human organization could be. It is a pity that he does not discuss whether the direction of the war might not have worked better, certainly more smoothly, if there had been a Chief of Defence Staff, rather than combining Chairmanship with being head of the army, and a joint service Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, instead of a headless committee. As Chief of the Defence Staff, Alanbrooke would have been under less strain, and the army could have benefited from having a head whose main preoccupation was not grand strategy, but the organization and training of the army.

The great merit of General Fraser's elegantly written and fascinating book is that, as a very professional soldier who has had personal experience of politico-military affairs at a high level, he can fully appreciate the many different aspects of a highly complex subject. His comments on men and events are invariably perceptive and fair. It is a biography of which Alanbrooke himself would have approved.

In *Women Beyond the Wire: A Story of Prisoners of the Japanese* (289pp, Michael Joseph, £9.95, 0 7181 1934-7) Lavinia Warner and John Sandilands reveal a little-known aspect of the Second World War. Hundreds of British women, principally civilians, fled before the Japanese advance through Malaya in 1942, only to end up as prisoners in jungle camps in Sumatra after the destruction of the evacuation fleet. Their experiences here, and during the evacuation, have been recounted by the authors in their narrative, which is based on contacts with more than fifty survivors throughout the world.

The angel of the absurd

By Conor Cruise O'Brien

PATRICK MCCARTHY:

Camus
A Critical Study of his Life and Work
359pp, Hamish Hamilton, £15.
0 241 10603 6

This is the best comprehensive study of Camus in English – and probably in any language. Herbert Lottman's biography *Albert Camus* (1979) is, as Patrick McCarthy says, "a treasure-house of facts on Camus' life", but it is obscure about his writing, and seems quite at sea when it comes to the intellectual, moral and political context of the life, especially the controversies of the period from the end of the Second World War to Camus's death.

McCarthy is strong in the areas where Lottman is weak. He is a subtle critic – though I think sometimes a wrong-headed one – and he is very familiar with, and discriminating about, the Cold War and Algerian controversies in which Camus was involved. This familiarity has also, I believe, enriched the strictly biographical part of McCarthy's study. The people he interviewed – and he draws rather heavily on interviews with Camus's friends and acquaintances – are necessarily the same as those already interviewed by Lottman, but McCarthy has been able to put more interesting questions to them.

In his introduction, he points out that while Camus's reputation has not fallen in Anglo-Saxon countries, in France it has. "There is hardly a novelist or dramatist working in France today who has been influenced by Camus." In part, he thinks, this is due to a great change that took place in French culture around 1960:

A literature of moral and political questioning, flavoured with rhetoric and polemic, gave way to a literature that was more obviously aesthetic and set out to investigate language. The now not so new novel made Camus, who had prepared the way for it in *L'Étranger*, seem obsolete.

McCarthy makes clear, however, that the decline in Camus's reputation in France was due not only to this broad cultural change, but also to a specific reaction against the excesses of the cult of the 1950s:

Retrospectively the tributes paid to him seem ridiculous. No man could have lived up to them and Camus less than most. He was not, for example, the Resistance warrior his admirers thought him. He did not enter the Resistance until eight months before the liberation of Paris. Behind the façade of triumph his post-war life might be seen as an exile from Algeria and as a string of failures. His news-paper, *Combat*, which was to be the model of truthful journalism collapsed, and his dispute with Sartre ended in a painful defeat, at least in the eyes of French intellectuals.

As can be seen, McCarthy's approach is free from the hushed reverence that has marked much writing on the subject in English, especially in the United States. That is all to the good, but I think McCarthy, not often, but occasionally, goes too far in the opposite direction. Thus there is a touch of the prosing counsel in his comment on Camus's relation to his old teacher, Jean Grenier:

Grenier's relationship with Camus is often misunderstood. Camus acknowledged his debt long and openly, referring to Grenier as "my master". He certainly felt this, but he may have known that admitting it did not detract from his originality and added to his reputation for generosity. This was an example of Camus' habitually angelic nature; honesty could become a strategy.

To turn something that Camus may or may not have known into an example of his "dubiously angelic nature" seems less than just. If a

somewhat fulsome tribute to an old teacher is to be held as evidence against us, which of us shall "scape whipping"? But it is true that Grenier did come to resent what he regarded as a patronizing annexation of himself and his work by his vastly more successful former pupil. He had some grounds for that resentment, and he seems to have passed it on to McCarthy.

In general, however, McCarthy is fair to Camus personally; although of course the hero-worshippers will disagree, and will resent this book. Where McCarthy ends up by being a little less than fair – and, in one important instance, less than perceptive – is in his treatment of Camus's work, and in particular the three novels on which his reputation must stand.

On *L'Étranger*, which, taken as a whole, I consider the weakest of the novels, McCarthy is at his best. About the powerful first part, up to the murder, he writes succinctly:

In the opening pages Meursault has none of the qualities that Camus associates with the absurd; he is neither brave nor generous. Surrounded by a universe he cannot penetrate, he displays the difference which Camus depicts as well. As a narrator Meursault tells a story that he cannot understand. So the point of view from which the novel is written reveals the frustration of humans trapped in an incomplete universe.

Then he identifies the point where the novel breaks up:

The novel changes when Meursault shoots the Arab and opens up that Pandora's box of problems. The first difficulty with these pages is that they do not fit because their language is different. Camus reverts to the solar lyricism of *La Mort Heureuse*: the sun shines with "opaque intoxication" and its rays are "swordsblades of light". The point of view shifts too for when Meursault exclaims "I understood that I had destroyed the harmony of the day," he is showing a comprehension that he has never shown before. This is a different and second Meursault who knows more than he did and yet does not fully understand what is happening.

This "second Meursault" McCarthy sees as "in part an artifice" of transition towards the "third Meursault": "the imprisoned innocent". Maybe so. As far as I am concerned, two Meursaults will do: a valid one thereafter. But McCarthy's analysis is rich and ingenious, and right about the basics. If he errs here, it is in being more generous to the regrettable second part of the book than it deserves.

About the other two novels, however, he tends to err on the negative side. About *La Peste* he writes (partly following Sartre and others):

Although the plague was non-human, it was supposed to be an image of the Occupation. But the Occupation was far from non-human and it involved agonizing choices. Tarrou illustrates this weakness when he links his stand against the plague with his rejection of violence. Sharing Camus' views on the death-penalty and on left-wing tyranny, Tarrou affirms that he will not kill. So he can combat the plague but he could have combated the Germans if one assumes, as Camus did in '43, that the Resistance had its hands clean. Even if one sets aside the problems of the parallels with the Occupation the flaw in *La Peste* remains. Any political or social action would surely be the purity in which Tarrou – like Camus – believes.

So the aristocrats of *La Peste* are frozen in their heroic posture. They defy the plague rather as Sisyphus defied his rock and their values are religious rather than practical.

This is perceptive; as far as it goes. If we are supposed to take *La Peste* as an allegory about Occupation or dictatorship, as Camus no doubt consciously intended, it is a

very weak allegory indeed. But if we take it, naively, at its face value, as being about human behaviour in the presence of a plague, then it is a strong and coherent novel: as I think we feel it to be when we actually read it, and forget about allegories. If we take the plague to represent mortality itself, the novel does not lose strength or coherence. It is true that *La Peste* carries no "political or social" message; Camus had no such message to deliver, even if he sometimes thought he had. But there is no rule (though Sartre and sometimes Camus thought there was) that a novel has to be political and/or social. McCarthy is right to use the word "religious" about *La Peste*. What I question is the implication that being religious implies some kind of failure. *La Peste* is, in my view, a religious morality-tale, like *The Pilgrim's Progress*; and it is also likely to last.

The weakest part of McCarthy's book is his treatment of Camus's best novel: *La Chute*. About the narrator of this book, McCarthy writes that "Clamence has nothing to say – which allows him to say whatever he pleases and hence to talk endlessly."

That is smart, sloppy and untrue. Clamence does have something to say: something terrible, about man's corrupt nature. He doesn't say what he pleases; he says what his creator's art, here at its most exigent, requires him to say. He doesn't "talk endlessly". The book is short, without tautology, and it ends.

"Simone de Beauvoir", says McCarthy, "identified Clamence with Camus and interpreted the novel as a piece of self-criticism but this is silly. Clamence is one of Camus' many selves, a creation of the mid-1950's Camus." That is missing the point in a big way. Simone de Beauvoir can be silly sometimes, but in this instance she was being shrewd. Camus, as McCarthy shows, was, in his post-war journalism and public statements, morally pretentious and self-righteous in the extreme. He was the pure man, the just man, accepted as such by his admirers, and bitterly resentful of those who, like Sartre and Francis Jeanson, told him otherwise. Jean-Baptiste Clamence, on the other hand, the ironic *Juge* *pénitent*, is above all a hunter and killer of moral pretensions. It seems to me impossible that there is not a strong element of self-criticism and self-mockery in all this. Camus had been told to come off it and he does come off it, though with a wry elegance and melancholy dignity that are, in a stylistic sense, grander than ever. Clamence is not just a creation of the "mid-1950's Camus"; he is also a critique of that same Camus, especially in his more public aspect.

McCarthy rightly calls *La Chute* a superb novel – and rightly calls it "a piece of religious writing" – but his treatment of it is relatively perfunctory, certainly as compared with his treatment of *L'Étranger*. I had the impression that towards the end of his book McCarthy was getting a bit bored with his subject, and increasingly uncomfortable at the thought of Camus's doddiness in the eyes of the contemporary French. A writer whose own prose is somewhat Gallicized – McCarthy uses "injurious" and "reunions" in what seem to be the French rather than the English meanings – is liable to be more sensitive than most anglophones to French fashions. If so it seems rather pity, if only because the fashion is liable to change. The moralizing tradition in which Camus wrote is so deeply rooted in French literature that its present disrepute can hardly last. And, as Mr McCarthy says, "The New Novel is not so new by now." A Camus revival seems possible before very long. Patrick McCarthy's *Camus*, if it is translated into French, might, not without irony, prove to be the turning of the tide of fashion.

A new English translation, by Joseph Laredo, of *The Outsider* by Albert Camus (366pp, Hamish Hamilton, £5.95, 0 241 10778 4) has recently been published; the original English translation of *L'Étranger* was by Stuart Gilbert and was published by Hamish Hamilton, with an introduction by Cyril Connolly, in June 1946:

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The plain-speaking cicerone

by T. J. Binyon

CLIVE JAMES:

From the Land of Shadows
294pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02021 8

Introductions to collections of literary journalism invariably claim that their contents are not, as they might seem, a miscellaneous rag-bag, but, rather, make up a coherent whole, informed by the same critical viewpoint and engaged with the same preoccupations. In the case of this selection of Clive James's reviews, written over the past four years for a variety of periodicals, the claim is perhaps truer than usual. James has a solid and individual critical personality, which is forceful enough to impose a degree of unity on some very disparate pieces. Unity of another kind is given by his increasing interest in Russian literature, and particularly in the work of the contemporary dissidents — Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, Bukovsky, Zinoviev and others. "Many of them," the jacket reverently informs us, "read in the original Russian."

His knowledge of the language gives James an edge in discussion which he is not slow to exploit. In the introduction he spends some time explaining the genesis of the title, *From the Land of Shadows*. This turns out to be a quotation from Zhdanov's famous 1946 attack on Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. James explains the phrase as referring to "the cosmopolitan heritage" of Akhmatova and others. "The land of shadows," he writes, "was evidently a place where art was pre-empted enough to behave as if it had its own laws." He goes on:

"The day I puzzled Zhdanov's unintentionally beautiful idea out of the original language and noted it down, I already knew that it was a special jewel. Zhdanov had set his precious stone in a knuckleduster. Time having elapsed it loosed, it was now free to be set in a ring, even if the ring had to be tinned. By accomplishing such a transference, however maladroitly, I could symbolise what I regarded myself as good for in the role of literary critic."

Unfortunately for the symbolism, under the jeweller's loupe the diamond proves to be paste; "ideas" in fact a heavy old cliché. It doesn't refer to the "cosmopolitan heritage" of these writers, but to their present insubstantiality; "the land of shadows" is better translated as "the land of shades", the underworld, as a reference to Lethe further up the page makes clear.

James's introduction gives us in addition some admiration of the kind of criticism we are to meet in the following pages. The language will be clear, self-confident and witty; ideas will be put over plainly, simply and forcibly. Positive though these qualities are, they have, too, a negative element. The line between plain speaking and aggressive philistinism is a narrow one, and it is not always clear that James has set up camp on the right side. Further, not everything is immediately reducible to one or two simple propositions, and we might expect that nuances and subtleties are likely to be handled roughly, even unfairly. In this connection there is a very definite bias against abstract discussion, and in particular against literary theory.

While it is a relief to read a work of criticism in which the names of Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan and Derrida are never invoked, James's dismissal of structuralism — "Structuralism is the greatest invention since pig Latin. It can make an idiot sound unfathomable" — sounds uncomfortably like the derision of the saloon bar for a subject it does not understand. This dislike of abstract thought comes out clearly, later in the book, in a review of Wayne Booth's *Critical Understanding*. This piece is serious, sensible, amusing and undogmatic — except in

one crucial point: James's refusal to admit that there can be any such thing as a critical method. "There is just criticism, an activity to which various critics contribute." There's a certain validity about this remark, but it is better employed than as an absolute in itself. James is probably wise to avoid the philosophical end of criticism, if his argument on the existence of objective truth is anything to go by: "If there were no such thing as objective truth, the contention that there is no such thing as objective truth could not be objectively true."

The contents of the collection fall into four sections, which correspond roughly to non-fiction, fiction, poetry and criticism, and, finally, the Russian experience. We open with an over-long, over-discursive piece on a biography of the Parisian beauty and art patroness Misa Sert: "her miraculously long legs and a bosom that kept strong men awake at night thinking." There is not a great deal of food for thought here otherwise, though the contention that the talented man deserves a beautiful, well-born patroness is perhaps worthy of more than a passing nod.

An article on a collection of Bernard Levin's journalism is interesting in that it gives from the beginning the vague impression that James is measuring himself up against his fellow journalist. The suspicion begins to harden as we move through the article. Levin, like James, "has always been quite right about the horrors of totalitarianism." Levin is basically right about Solzhenitsyn, but should like James, be more critical of him. And the suspicion finally turns into a certainty when we read that the main reason Levin "is given to long sentences is that he is not self-conscious enough to write short ones." James, of course, writes very short ones indeed, and is as self-conscious as they come.

It is rather surprising to find among the novel reviews two bludgeoning pieces the author wrote for the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Review of Books* respectively on Judith Krantz's *Princess Daisy* and Erica Jong's *Fanny*. They are both still quite funny, although considerably less so than they were. But taken in conjunction with the introduction the effect is as if a condescending for the world heavyweight title had listed among his earlier bouts the roughing-up of two ten-year-old girls on their way home from school.

Nevertheless, as one progresses through the essays James's strengths as a critic become more obvious; he is extremely good at deflating pretension and exposing silliness, and the more worthy the opponent, the more rewarding this becomes. He joyfully lays into a biography of Malcolm Macgeridge, sparing no one in his way. Referring to the historian David Irving is like referring to the metallurgist Uri Geller. He lambastes Le Carré's later novels in a thoughtful way, and, in more serious mood, considers and regretfully rejects Voznesensky's claims to have achieved stature as a poet.

But his outstanding talent is as a cicerone, guiding the ignorant traveller with patience, knowledge and wit round some favourite literary edifices and communicating his own admiration of it to the goggling and fascinated visitor. There are a number of examples of this uncommon ability here: reviews of Gore Vidal's essays, and of his novel, *Kalki*; of Charles Johnson's *Collected Poems*; of *The Oxford Book of Saints*; and of *The Oxford Book of Saints*. The collection — the essay "On Larkin's Wit" which takes with ingenious originality almost all the examples from *All White Jazz*; Larkin's collected *Daily Telegraph* jazz record reviews.

James responds to contemporary Soviet dissident literature in the same way. In reviewing Bukovsky's *To Build a Castle*, Sakharov's

Alarm and Hope, Solzhenitsyn's *Prussian Nights*, and, above all, Zinoviev's *The Yawning Heights*, *The Radiant Future* and *Sun Illusions* he acts again as guide and interpreter, calling attention to this time, however, not to architectural detail, but to political philosophy. These articles, together with a review of translations of Mandelstam, are obviously seen by James as the keystone of the collection. They are certainly serious, well-considered pieces, which treat their subject — life and literature in the totalitarian state — with a proper gravity. Indeed James, in the introduction and in the articles themselves, brings a great deal of moral indignation to bear, not only on the subject itself, but also on those Western commentators who fail to appreciate the essential difference between the two systems. "The idea that the repressive conditions of the Soviet Union make poetry mean more to its citizens is essentially and insultingly frivolous," he writes; and "Those glib Western authors who go on junkets to Moscow and Leningrad at the invitation of the Writers' Union... are kept safe by their natural obtuseness from realising that the Writers' Union is an organization which exists in order to seek out talent and make certain that it is expunged." Here, unfortunately, righteous indignation has veered towards ludicrous over-statement.

In some ways James is, in fact, a very Russian critic. He likes his literature to have ideas or messages in it, even if he disagrees with them. Anthony Burgess's 1981, which he dislikes, nevertheless stimulates the production of a neat short history of science fiction, and a sensible analysis of the difference between science fiction and the work of Zamyatin, Orwell and Huxley. Literature seems important because it is about life. The idea that literature might be important as an obvious possibility, is not taken seriously. It is not altogether unexpected, therefore, that the one unequivocal failure in the collection is a review of the second edition of Nabokov's translation of and commentary on *Eugene Onegin*. It is a clear case of antipathetic minds failing to meet on any level whatsoever.

James is obviously rattled from the very beginning; he repeats some of the strictures made by previous critics on Nabokov's translation, and gets into a shouting match over the commentary: "As for Tolstoy's version of *Eugene Onegin*, it is not a 'silly opera'. It is a great opera." He then loses his head completely, denounces Tatiana, in her final speech, confesses her love to Onegin — "I love you (why dissimulate?) — Nabokov's translation; James prefers Johnson, who pads with 'I love you (what's the use of hide-behind-deceit or double-dealing?)" — and finally rushes upon his own destruction by engaging Nabokov on the field of versification.

For a critic who doesn't so much parade his knowledge of Russian as double it fearfully round the square in full marching order until it collapses from exhaustion, James seems to have given curiously little thought to the abstract problems of translation, though he is quick to criticize. Of a sentence in Gillon Aitken's translation of *The Queen of Spades* describing the Countess: "she removed the patches from her face," James comments: "The reference is to the Countess's early days in Paris, when she was a young beauty, not an old boot. Saving the patches makes her sound like a heavily repaired motor tube." The original word, *mooshki*, actually means stick-on beauty spots. It is true that the contemporary English word for such cosmetic aids was, precisely, "patches," but the same word will not serve the turn now. "Has James considered the abyss of uncertainty which that casual phrase opens for the translator — were he to be foolish enough to take any notice of it? (And why the crude phonetic trans-



Peter Sellers peering Clouseau-like from behind a copy of *The Times*. This photograph, taken in 1963, is reproduced from Bill Brandt's *Portraits* (104 black-and-white illustrations. Gordon Fraser, £19.50, 0 80092 064 X). In his introduction, Alan Ross remarks that Brandt's subjects seem rarely to smile and, though seldom photographed at work, their expressions are often "indicative of how we imagine them to look when they are working". Perhaps unconsciously, Brandt sometimes provides further clues to personalities and inclinations — the obscure heading "Shipwrecked by Praxys in the Falklands" in Sellers's newspaper, or Daisy Ashford, also photographed in 1963, seemingly warning her hands over a nursery fireguard.

caption *mooshki*? Is its author Pooshkin?)

At the end of his introduction James remarks that he aspires to nothing more than to sound reasonable and to write common sense. He certainly succeeds. Nowhere in his criticism does he achieve what might be called the stout Cortez effect, nowhere is one surprised by the shock of the new or the discovery of the unknown. No original interpretations can be expected, no revaluation of values. In defence of his aim James writes that "Einstein showed only in the 'learned but stylistically frolicsome translation by Bernard Guilbert Guerney." Ask him to name an academic genius or two, and without pausing for breath he will list Ernest Robert Curtius, Menendez Pidal, Natalino Sapegno, Gianfranco Contini, George Saintsbury and W. P. Ker. Give him a selection of Hugh Kingsmill's aphorisms, and with a flourish of the pen he will point out that the best "have been by Le Rochefoucauld's realism tempered by La Bruyère's humanity." "Some," he adds generously, "even have Santayana's or Lichtenberg's philosophical depth."

Where will James go now? A glance at the list of his works demonstrates the protean nature of his creative personality, equally at home in autobiography, narrative verse, literary and television criticism, and collections of lyrics set and sung by Pete Aitkin. The photograph on the dust-jacket is suggestive, however, of a student of Russian literature: "The reader walks out of a garden into a desert," and 230 pages later he warns the prospective student of Russian literature that "it is like walking out of a garden into a desert." Writing of Larkin, he compares him to Montale and then to read about the amulet in *Dora Markin* or the children with the swords in *Café Rapallo* are unlikely to forget them when they read *Cast his own death he willed that his spirit should be resurrected in the*

form of children's games." Writing of Mandelstam, he compares him to Montale: "that amulet in his poem about Dora Markin is the kind of token which turns up in Mandelstam time after time, and the children in *Café Rapallo* might be playing one of the very games which Mandelstam saw as the only repository for his doomed soul."

But the lasting impression is of our critic's truly amazing breadth of reading. He writes on Dante as readily as on Auden, on Nixon as readily as on Pushkin. He has read Merzhkovsky's *Leonardo da Vinci*, if only in the "learned but stylistically frolicsome translation by Bernard Guilbert Guerney." Ask him to name an academic genius or two, and without pausing for breath he will list Ernest Robert Curtius, Menendez Pidal, Natalino Sapegno, Gianfranco Contini, George Saintsbury and W. P. Ker. Give him a selection of Hugh Kingsmill's aphorisms, and with a flourish of the pen he will point out that the best "have been by Le Rochefoucauld's realism tempered by La Bruyère's humanity." "Some," he adds generously, "even have Santayana's or Lichtenberg's philosophical depth."

It is a truly courageous act, however, to bring the dispora of articles together under one roof, connecting to be made, which would otherwise have never come to light. In the introduction James writes of the student of Russian literature: "The reader walks out of a garden into a desert," and 230 pages later he warns the prospective student of Russian literature that "it is like walking out of a garden into a desert." Writing of Larkin, he compares him to Montale and then to read about the amulet in *Dora Markin* or the children with the swords in *Café Rapallo* are unlikely to forget them when they read *Cast his own death he willed that his spirit should be resurrected in the*

Politics as they were

By Janet Morgan

LORD BUTLER:

The Art of Memory
Friends in Perspective
175pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
£7.95.
0 340 26497 7

As the A40 nears London, motorists find themselves navigating an obstacle course which announces itself to be a "grade separation scheme". Since no one knows that this notice means and there are no obvious clues, it serves no useful purpose. It neither consoles drivers by promising future benefits in return for temporary inconvenience, nor informs them as to what is going on. It is irritating, patronizing and unnecessary and shows that muddled people are in charge. It illustrates exactly the statement the late Lord Butler makes in his introduction: "Politics have changed much in the period since I entered, namely 1929".

For the picture he gives in this short book of memoirs is of politicians and bureaucrats who saw the importance of assessing public reaction, of explaining, informing and negotiating, and who were capable of doing so in simple and effective language. Here is Ernest Bevin, demonstrating the inadequacy of dockers' wages not simply by his mastery of figures but also by producing ten plates, with a trifle of vegetable or cheese on each, and asking the Industrial Court whether they could live on that diet for a week and haul an average of seventy tons a day on their backs. Here is Halifax, as Viceroy, appealing to Indians and Europeans for a change of soul, to avoid the dangers of rioting and "upset", Nehru discovering India and its people as he trudged along in the dust, Bevin "burning with the difficulty of the union district", Macleod astutely negotiating with the unions and William Temple craftily coaxing the Church to support Butler's Education Bill. The quotations which Lord Butler gives from their writings and speeches and his own clear language cannot help but suggest that there was a time when public servants felt it necessary to let people know what they were talking about.

It is interesting that the book should give this impression because, apart from Bevin, Bevan, and Butler's first cousin Charles Sorley, the poet, all those he describes here seem to move in a remote and special world: the "politics" one "enters", in fact. They are attuned to currents of popular feeling and occasionally subject themselves to election but by and large they get on with what they perceive to be their public duty, as if expecting no one — not polls, not journalists, not militants nor "marginal groups" — to question the appropriateness of their doing so.

Butler's consciously casual, ironic way of expressing himself encourages us to see his contemporaries in this light: of the offer of the Viceroyalty to Edward Halifax, "one who had held only three minor political posts and was only forty-four", he writes, "But his grandfather had held high office in India in the middle of the century before so that in some ways the appointment was not entirely novel to the family". And, later, describing Halifax's unwise visit to shoot foxes with Goering in November 1937, "Eden had agreed with reluctance, but he regretted it later, because he thought that Halifax should not have had serious talks with Hitler about his expansionist plans, even if he was going in his capacity as Master of the Middleton Hunt". Butler cites the advice of David Margesson, the powerful Conservative Chief Whip, that on becoming a junior minister he should select Chips Channon to assist him: "You have just been made Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs which you will find very difficult and trying. You will want a worldly Parliamentary Private Secretary who will tell you all the gossip of London." That was what mattered, he depicts the

"head, upward spiral" of William Temple's ecclesiastical career, its only pauses "when the Bishop of Oxford declined initially to accept him as a candidate for Holy Orders because of his uncertain, precarious and unsteady attitude towards the Virgin Birth and Resurrection and made him wait two years, and when the Prime Minister offered him a canonry at Westminster Abbey, only to find that he was not yet qualified". And the Walter Monckton's particular service to the nation is described in the same domestic, throwaway voice: "The arrangement to send Mrs Simpson abroad relieved the strain to some extent but it was only later that Walter, aided by the Prime Minister, was able to persuade the King that the only course open to him was to abdicate. Walter gently pushed the King in the direction of the constitutional solution, which was what the government wanted." And, eventually, "The end thus came and the King sailed for France in a destroyer."

It is all very intimate, Baldwin, making the final speech on the Abdication, dives his hand into his left pocket "out of which he pulled first an envelope, then several pieces of paper, then one or two postage stamps" and places them in front of him. Monckton becomes Chairman of the Midland Bank, "better for him really than being Lord Chief Justice, for the Midland Bank was extremely kind and well organized. He transacted affairs with the aid of his general managers and was able to give entertainment as no other bank could do, the Midland having a special social reputation." Halifax is less hospitable. A Foreign Office messenger brings four biscuits and two cups of tea. "Halifax pushed away two biscuits and said, 'Mr Butler does not want these. Nor do I. Do not charge me.'" How cosy it is. Butler, "left in control" after Suez, while Eden is in Jamaica, "withdrew the troops, got money out of my old friend George Humphrey, the American Secretary of the Treasury, with which to repay our loans and debts, and restored the pound".

A far cry from these meretricious, technocratic days; do our present politicians seen sham and insecure by comparison? Just as Butler's manner conceals a serious and conscientious purpose, so the people he remem-

bers were, for all their effortless appearance, dedicated and serious too. For his book he chose friends and colleagues who enjoyed a particular talent and represented certain qualities: Bevan, "the greatest parliamentary orator since Charles James Fox", Sorley, whose moving verse survived his death in the First World War; Chips Channon, one of those who does society "a great service" by assembling together disparate who had become by courage a statesman... who was fundamentally a poet, and the rest.

Is the manner designed to cover disappointment or to soothe residual bitterness? Certainly it serves to convey world-weary amusement at the folly and pettiness of others; "annoying — but then who else could now expect?" is the tone in which Butler refers to his own setbacks. Of the post-Suez period, for instance, he writes: "Meanwhile the members of the 1922 Committee by subtle propaganda had been told that the withdrawal had been my fault. I suffered very much at this time. Churchill too was taken in and so I was not surprised when he, for whom I had worked for so many years, supported Macmillan as Prime Minister. I do not think there have been many occasions when the blame was more wrongfully attached."

He gives a wistful impression of being, deliberately or accidentally, left out. "I was not in on the initial contacts between the Israelis and the French on the Suez venture as I was attending the Queen at the opening of a power station in the North of England"; of the Profumo affair ("I was all very sad and I was sorry I was not brought into it") he writes "There had been much discussion in the Conservative Party while I was absent in Africa... when Churchill telephoned at midnight to say that he and Monckton had settled the 1953 railway strike, since 'Butler did not like to keep you up'. Butler's reproachful thought was that 'I was up nearly every night until one o'clock doing my boxes. Of course I could have been present, and most of all, in 1944 Butler was unable to follow his momentous Education Bill through its Lords stages 'since I had broken some bones falling off a ladder trying to

Not ruthless enough? Yes, but in too oblique and subtle a style, to have got to No 10. None the less *The Art of Memory, Like The Art of the Possible*, with its dreadful steeliness, will continue to amuse and instruct long after volumes of self-justifying prime ministerial reminiscence have ceased to do so.

Trifles from the front

By Julian Jeffs

MAURICE BARING:

Dear Animated Best
Letters to Lady Juliet Duff, France
1915-1918
165pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell.
£7.50.
0 8595 086 9

This is a book of light-hearted letters, never intended for publication, written by Baring to a friend for relaxation while he was deeply involved in the Royal Flying Corps during the desperate struggle of the First World War, and was often in danger. In them his humour never deserts him, nor does his poetry.

When war was declared Baring was forty, an established man of letters, with no military connections, but his friend Sir David Henderson, who had been put in charge of the newly formed Royal Flying Corps, took him on as an intelligence officer. On August 12, 1914 he landed in France, one of the first to arrive, and remained there, apart from short breaks, until the end of the war. His background and his fluent French made him invaluable. His friends included leading politicians and journalists (to whom he could communicate the needs and views of the Flying Corps) as well as many of the most famous women of his time, such as Lady Desborough and Lady Hillingdon. But his chosen correspondent was Lady Juliet Duff, a Protestant, not intellectual, and not famed as a beauty; but Baring found her attractive and above all relaxing and sympathetic. She was several

years younger than he was, the only child of the Fourth Earl of Londsdale. Her husband, Sir Robin Duff, had been killed early in the war, leaving her with an only son, then aged seven.

In this period Baring, beyond doubt, was working incessantly. Yet no one reading this book would suspect it. Readers might even take him to be a dilettante scribbling elegant trifles while in Europe burnt. In truth, though, it was in these trifles that a sensitive, dedicated man relaxed and refreshed himself whenever he could snatch a minute's leisure. Read all together, these letters cohere as if they were written retrospectively as a work of art. Sometimes they are in verse, or include triolets and lines of real poetry. Occasionally the frustrations of a staff officer leak out. The valour of the early air-aces is faithfully recorded and there is deeply felt sorrow for the deaths of friends. The clown is never so very far from tragedy and the picture of service life is a very real one, supplementing the letters he published in 1920 as *R.F.C.H.*, which are still in print.

By the time the first letter was written on December 13, 1915, he had already been over a year in France. The last, typed in block capitals on November 17, 1918, celebrated the Armistice. There are gaps — sometimes as long as three months — but on eleven days he wrote twice and on one day he wrote three times. He never addressed her the same way twice. Once he wrote to "Dear Mrs Juliet Duff", but usually he was more familiar. An undated letter (April, 1917) began "Dear Animated Best", which gives the book its misleading title. Some were even odder: "O Liebig mein, cher

put a young blackbird back into its nest and had to go to hospital".

Lord Butler may underplay his own role in post-war Conservative politics but he none the less succeeds in leaving us with an awareness of its magnitude. We may finish his book without any clear memory of the chronological order in which he occupied various senior offices but we have certainly been discreetly reminded that he did hold them, that it was very hard work, and of the depth of Harold Macmillan's condemnation when in 1962 he asked Butler to "take on the duties of a new makeshift job in Central Africa", dispatching him with the comforting words that when during the war Macmillan had become Minister Resident in North-west Africa "he had made his reputation, just as I would now make mine...". Butler had by then served as Minister of Education, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House and Lord Privy Seal, Home Secretary...

If the punches are pulled, it is in an effective, felicitous way. Not surprisingly Churchill, Macmillan and Eden suffer particularly. "Winston Churchill, with all his fine speeches has... done harm to the cause of oratory among young people today, and I think he did harm to Harold Macmillan, who copied him...". "Harold Macmillan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, did not speak or take any great part except to talk to the 1922 Committee in a bellicose manner...". "I still feel that for a man to have a prostate operation is not necessarily demand his resignation and retirement. However, other people thought otherwise...". "Eden, who had been so brilliant a negotiator in his prime, became a 'one-man band' at this time"; "when it was all over I was no more bitter or upset than I have been in other periods of my career, for I realized how it had all happened and I realized that the Edens knew that I had remained loyal".

Not ruthless enough? Yes, but in too oblique and subtle a style, to have got to No 10. None the less *The Art of Memory, Like The Art of the Possible*, with its dreadful steeliness, will continue to amuse and instruct long after volumes of self-justifying prime ministerial reminiscence have ceased to do so.

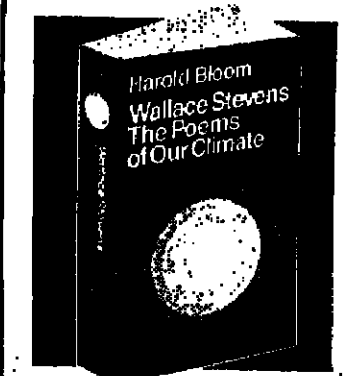
And although he quite often signed himself M.B., this simple ending became rarer and the inventions wilder as the correspondence went on. How, one wonders, did a woman of limited learning, manage when he wrote passages of Latin, Greek, Spanish, Italian or German? Did it really matter?

The original letters were all typewritten, with a perverse and sometimes calculated degree of inaccuracy that adds considerably to their savour. They were set up in type which the publisher of this book, in his preface, fairly describes as being "in galley proof of uneven ink, and often with some bowing of the lines of type". Three sets were bound up, one for Baring himself, one for Lady Juliet, and one for Hilaire Belloc. Alas this book only reproduces about a third of the original. And having just criticized the original galleys, it is a pity that the printing (including the linking) of this book is very poor. Although there is a good and helpful index, a total lack of editorial footnotes makes some passages incomprehensible. But let us hope that it will whet the appetite for a complete, annotated edition.

The Hertford Mawson Letters (145pp. The Wallace Collection, £2.75.) comprises the correspondence between Richard Seymour-Conway (1800-70), the 4th Marquess of Hertford and his agent, the art-dealer Samuel Mawson. Hertford, a man of enormous wealth, fine intelligence and a hypochondria relieved only by a genuine illness, was the outstanding contributor to the Wallace collection. Both Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington had once considered him a potential Tory Prime Minister, but he chose to live in Paris.

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The author of many important works of criticism, including *The Victorian Company*, *Shelley's Mythmaking*, and *Blake's Apocalypse*, Harold Bloom has created an indispensable guide to Wallace Stevens' poetic canon. Bloom's *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* is now published in paperback. The product of twenty years of thinking and writing about Stevens, this work reproduces a brilliant selection of Bloom's theories of literary interpretation. It is a significant addition to the literature on the American Romantic movement.



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Jonathan Cape

commentary

The dream-state

By Richard Osborne

The Flying Dutchman
Coliseum
Der fliegende Holländer
Salzburg: Neues Festspielhaus

Much has been made of Wagner's apparent uncertainty of touch in *The Flying Dutchman*, permitting audiences and critics to regard it with tolerant benevolence much as one regards a characterful but unruly child. David Pountney's new ENO production panders to these expectations, submerging a difficult but by no means impossible work in a swirl of unsifted images: Herbert von Karajan, on the other hand, in his new Salzburg Easter Festival production, treats the work, like Krauss and Klemperer before him, as a naturally integrated music-drama. It is a more conservative view than Pountney's, born of half a century's experience of Wagner production and executed with an enviable grasp of the score's inner detail.

Wagner himself valued clarity in such matters. In *Musik der Zukunft* he observed: "For a saga, from whatever period or nation it might derive, has the merit that what it seizes upon is the purely human aspects in a way peculiar to itself, pregnant, and immediately understandable." The legendary tone, he goes on to argue, transforms the mind into a dream-like state, a clairvoyant vision. For Karajan, the conductor-producer, such clairvoyance comes in moments of rapt stasis at the work's core. As Karajan conducts it, the meeting of Senta and Vanderdecken is a scene of recognition and quiet arousal, as fine as anything until the first act of *Die Walküre*. Theatricality, all that is needed is a dimming of the lights that turns Daland's hospitable, strenuous hut into a charmed space in contrast, thinks "dream-state" solutions "pop out" (his own phrase), though, paradoxically, he is happy to use dream effects to conjure redundant atmosphere. Thus, at the very outset of the production when the music is at its briniest, elaborate projections superimpose images of low inundation, poorly synchronized with the overture's urgent flow, while, later, neither the staging nor the conducting prepares us for the raptness of the central encounter.

Both productions play the drama in a single act, an admirable idea, meeting Wagner's original intention for the *Dutchman* as well as his writer's concern that atmosphere, action, and evolving psychological states should be seamlessly integrated. It does, none the less, present problems of scenic continuity. In Salzburg the two orchestral transformations. At the Coliseum a higher price is exacted in the shape of its cinematographic projections of sea and sky, its huge intrusive sails (blurring the distinctions of mood Wagner asked for between Daland's and the Dutchman's ship), its realistic permanent "sea-scape" and its shantily-realized fears, too readily deleted to the English idea of a "team" neglecting to notice amid a flurry of visual invention that his production has no evolving line, no stylistic consistency, no determining centre. Pountney is called for. The appearance of black stained dolls as the storm batter the ghost ship in Act 3 is a thoroughly bad idea, a gratuitous piece of Stanley Spencer; yet the sailors' address to the phantom ship is thrilling. Pountney treats the sailors as a "Victorian lynch mob; and their cries, "Are you there?" have a *Gringollesque* immediacy. Such blunt realism suits the character of the orchestral performance under Mark Elder which is

strong on energy, catching well the howl and whine of the sea winds.

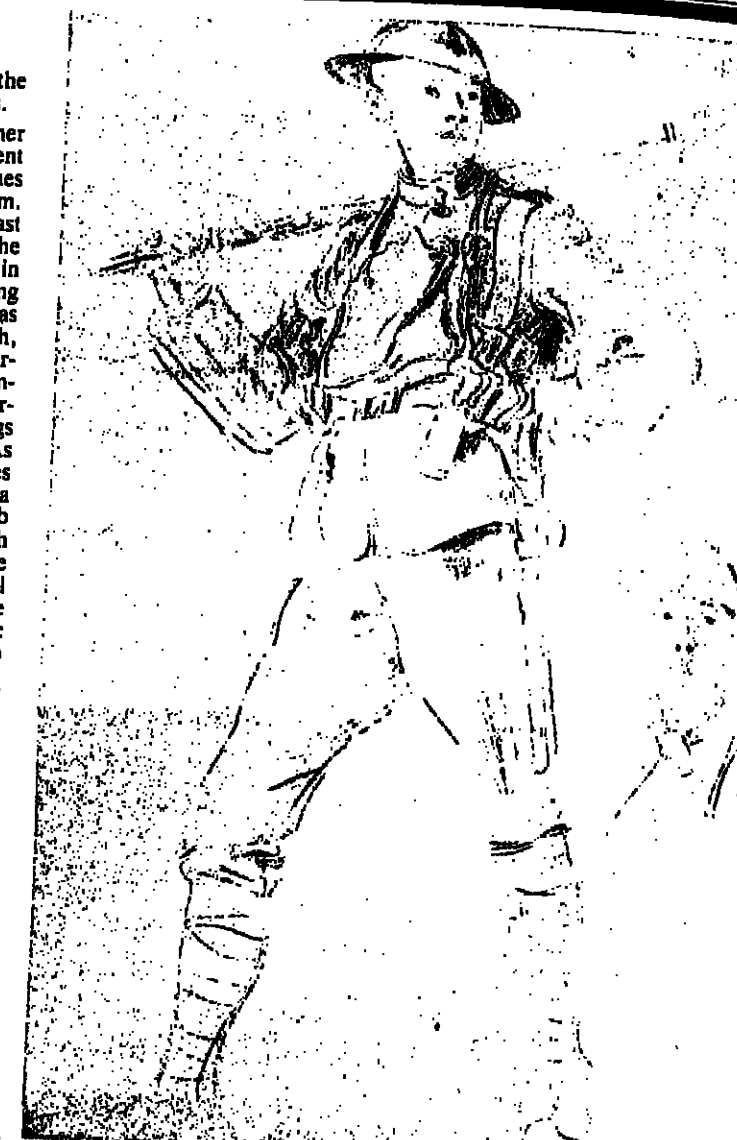
In Salzburg, where Günther Schneider-Siemssen is the resident designer, the immensely wide Neues Festspielhaus stage abets naturalism. Here we are presented with a vast open seascape penetrated only by the landing stage's central swirl and, in due course, by the huge looming prow of the Dutchman's ship. It is as ominous as a seascape by Friedrich, and more gloomily actual. The Over-tonic tone poem before closed curtains, suggests archetypal happenings amid inhospitable Nordic seas. As the performance evolves, it becomes evident that his reading – seen as a whole and registered by the superb Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with an uncanny accuracy of timbre (gaunt double-basses, sepulchral drums) – distinguishes between the opera's elemental and domestic sides. Though a single pulse seems to inform the entire reading, there are resting points within it, scenes of domestic intimacy which draw a sweeter tone and more compliant rhythm from the orchestra.

Where others have seen the work in rawly elemental terms, the character's destinies rough-hewn by fate, Karajan suggests a drama of unassuaged inner longing played out against a background which is by turn chillingly neutral and delusively secure. His Dutchman is José van Dam, the voice of much finer grain than that of ENO's Norman Bailey, his words more audible (helped by better acoustics and a chamber-music-like rapport with the Berlin players), his costume less outlandish. As Karajan and van Dam conceive him, the Dutchman is no hardy blasphemer; rather, a solitary, sensitive man in whom pride has melted to patient regret. Thomas Mann spoke of the Dutchman's "painful and obscure solitude" and it was a mark of van Dam's, and Karajan's, powers of concentration that his presence was felt even when he was isolated for long periods as an observer. Vocally, van Dam sustains a legato line of unusual beauty. The latter part of his opening monologue is especially moving, as is his *sotto voce* singing in the central duet, and his final leave-taking. Kurt Moll, the distinguished Gurnemann of the 1981 Salzburg *Farsfall*, is a Daland of substance and dignity, complementing the Dutchman but of another world.

Karajan's Senta, Catarina Ligendza, is very much the girl-next-door. With her coy, willowy gestures she presents a Senta whose life is bewilderingly changed by forces she does not properly understand. She is the reverse of Josephine Barstow's portrait, a Senta as blazingly alive as any since Anja Silja's whom Barstow partially resembles in dress (flame red), manner, and vocal style. Karajan conducts the Spinning Chorus with wit and charm, and has in Reinhold Goldberg an unusually pleasing, dramatically plausible Erik. His dream vision of the Dutchman's ship is a moment of great inwardness with Senta, badly staged by Pountney, is beautifully placed and sung at Salzburg. For once one shares the Dutchman's alarm and grows in sympathy with him.

As the scene reverts to maritime desolation, Karajan opts for the revised ending, where Pountney counterpoints the blunder original end, the haunting image of Senta winding herself into oblivion like Perrot's Ondine. In a sense, neither available end suits Karajan's conception, which seems to demand the quiet nullity of a postlude by Mahler such as was heard two nights later in his memorial, and harrowing reading of Mahler's Ninth Symphony.

As a tribute to the late Ben Nicholson, the Tate Gallery has placed on display thirty of his works from the Gallery's collection, spanning the years 1928 to 1978, and three loans



"Studies of a Canadian Soldier", c. 1918, from the exhibition Augustus John, The Early Years: 1900-1918 at the Maclean Gallery, 35 St George Street, London W1, until June 3.

Symbols and sentiment

By Richard Combs

The Border
Plaza One Cinema

Somewhere inside the earnest political simplicities of *The Border*, there is a smart, cynical movie about greed and corruption on the dividing line between the United States and Mexico. It's the kind of film that might ideally have been made by Sam Peckinpah, who has frequently been drawn to that border (in contemporary pieces like *The Getaway* as well as in his Westerns) and to the divided promise it holds out to its heroes – the possibility of freedom in a new life, the probability of oblivion in exile. (One of the writers of *The Border*, Walton Green, in fact worked on Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*.) But in the film that has been named by Tony Richardson, something rather less dynamic and more snugly liberal has emerged: a homily about the consumer society in which materialism on the one side and poverty on the other are intercut. The result is both diffuse and diagrammatic, a basic exercise in political dialectics that blunts what should have been the film's dramatic strengths.

In Los Angeles, Charlie Smith (Jack Nicholson) is increasingly miserable as an immigration cop employed in making life miserable for the city's illegal Mexican population. His wife (Valerie Perrine), braggart, and an invitation from an old friend to share just such a duplex in El Paso, Texas, induces him to move south. There he joins the Border Patrol, and his fellow patrolman Harvey Keitel is soon educating him in how to translate the good life into something even better. Meanwhile, escaping an earthquake in Mexico, Maria (Elpidia Carrillo) travels north with her younger brother, to try to find a minimal life by crossing the border with the exploited tide of

"wetback" labour. Charlie and Maria are obviously destined to meet, eventually at a narrow stretch of the river that separates their two worlds.

But apart from reiterating an obvious comparison, this parallel storytelling is not all that revealing. Although it indicates that the rich landowners of Southern California have ways of circumventing the law to smuggle in cheap labour, the film is uninformative about how this traffic actually works. Instead, it veers between symbolism (the final passage of Maria and her compatriots is arranged by removal via little different from a Nazi cattle-truck) and sentiment (Nicholson's final ride to the rescue of Maria's baby) of an equally obvious kind. The film is neither detailed nor perceptive enough in its indictment of the conspicuous consumption that uses up people as much as furniture. It is as if the Englishman Richardson, out of his native context, was assuming much more than he knew about the social situation – and falling back on some fairly trite images.

What also renders the film oddly inert is that it is laden with dynamic actors who don't really have enough to occupy them. It is a perverse achievement in itself to have managed Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel and Warren Oates into a situation where they can do little more than operate as symbols or ciphers. Oates is particularly under-used as the inevitably corrupt police chief, but both Keitel and Nicholson fence through rather baffled dialogues which fail to do more than state the moral alternatives. The actors' respective personae of the film in search of a home. When Nicholson regains his moved out of the parks and reserves department into real police work, his wiseful "I loved feeding those ducks" acquires a mocking air, like the banality he chewed his way through with such relish in *The Shining*, obviously out of key with what the line is supposed to be telling us about the character.

commentary

In two dimensions

By Emrys Jones

Much Ado About Nothing
Royal Shakespeare Theatre

The set for Terry Hands's new production of *Much Ado About Nothing* at Stratford strikes the keynote: virginal instability. At the back hang graceful silhouettes of trees, all perfectly reflected in the mirror which is the stage floor. It is not even clear where the actors' entries are; solid and void merge. The design (by Ralph Koltai) is precisely delineated and beautiful to look at, yet insubstantial and deceptive. When the actors appear, they take some getting used to: the reversed images swimming beneath their feet infect them with their own two-dimensionality. The costumes they wear, the general style of dress, tug in the same direction: they evoke Caroline forms, but never with any attempt at historical exactitude. A kind of abstract idealism hovers about them. The stage furniture is similarly spare of detail: the few chairs used are modern, but not so modern that they jar against the overall effect of being not quite in any period, in and out of time.

The stage spectacle seems not only timeless but weightless. These figures moving to and fro over the gigantic mirror look strangely disembodied, treading or standing on dark watery depths. And the doubled images that the eye gradually learns to accept are themselves matched by the twinning of certain characters onstage, notably Don Pedro and Don John. At first one is puzzled: for Don Pedro, bearded, looks villainous brother, sister, then smooth-faced, looks merely sanctimonious or puritanical. Hero, always a pallid part, is easily confused with her maid Margaret: it is only too plausible that Margaret should later impersonate her in the oftstage balcony scene. In any case by that time we have learned that misunderstanding and misinterpretation are the life-principles of this play's world – Don Pedro's offer of

proxy wooing is promptly misinterpreted by two sets of eavesdroppers, and the masked ball adds to the confusion, with the women undecieved by the men's masks and with Don John pretending to mistake Claudio for Don Pedro; in each case the use of masks is wholly ineffectual, though other kinds of deception have only too much effect. That the senses can't be trusted, not even the eyes, is one of the play's leading assumptions; and the eye-teasing, kaleidoscopically dissolving images which the mirror-set projects at us re-inforce the point with dazzling but almost exhausting profusion.

That man's mind can't be trusted any more than his eyes or ears is another of the play's sceptical little lessons. "Man is a giddy thing, this is my conclusion," says Benedick just as the play too is concluding. Men are ruled by their passions, which are as volatile as the fashions in clothes they are also slaves to – a point which Borachio makes in the other of the play's references to giddiness: "what a deformed thief this fashion is, how giddily 'a turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty". And a perception of giddiness – a sense of what it is to be at the mercy of sense impressions, subject to passions as a weather-cock is to winds – is just what this always intelligent production communicates throughout.

All of which is to say that this is a highly theme-conscious producer's reading of *Much Ado*. It brings out the play's intellectual design with great lucidity. But it does so at the expense of some other qualities which are possibly even more important. To begin with, its abstractionist bias has the unfortunate effect of depriving the action of its social specificity, its sheer human grain and density. For if its visual doubling and echoic shimmering brilliantly serve the giddiness theme, they also drain a certain life and colour from the characters, who are made to inhabit a mirroring void rather than a believable place. In fact most of them seem a bit overwhelmed by the set's beautiful but implacable insistence. They come across as more roles or types than people, and leave one

with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction, hankering for the tang of real personality. An exception is the outsize Dogberry of Terry Woods, who physically towers over the other actors and over none more than his partner, the frail but perky Verges (a good cameo from Jimmy Gardner). A different kind of small success is Derek Godfrey's Don Pedro, a courteous unselfish performance, which hints at the slightly low spirits of the unmarried bachelor, who has also the tact never to draw attention to himself.

Beatrice and Benedick, less sharply individualized than in some previous incarnations, are made to approximate as soon as possible to a rather generalized model of a woman and a man in love. Sinead Cusack is a beautiful and charming actress, but she is not well cast as Beatrice. She tends to simplify the part in the direction of emotional plangency, seeming strongest and surest in the explosion of feeling following the church scene. Earlier she comes perilously close to being a Beatrice without wit. The text makes it clear that she is, on the surface at least, high-spirited and much given to laughing ("a pleasant-spirited lady"; "There's little of the melancholy element in her", etc.). These views of her by other characters may be superficial and even in part mistaken, but there must be some basis for them. Miss Cusack from the start emanates frustration of spirit and inner agitation, a reading which unbalances the earlier scenes and makes the later change of manner less telling than it might be. She is not always well served by the staging. Since her role, though central, is not verbally very extended, as much as possible should be made of everything she says. But in the ball scene, she is made to speak some of her lines through, or against, the music, an arrangement which robs her of a couple of her best moments. The "star danced" speech, on the other hand, seems taken too slowly and weightily, making it over-exposed. To release its very special brilliancy, the remark surely needs to be almost thrown away. That was how Diana Wynyard did it in the 1950s, with breath-taking effect. But Miss Cusack's pacing and timing of

her wittier speeches are often open to question.

Benedick is much more with Derek Jacobi's range than Beatrice is within Miss Cusack's. His Benedick is a likeable, commanding performance. He makes him a genial, slightly foolish fellow, with not much dignity, but a good deal of natural warmth. He is at his best in the eavesdropping scene – which he enjoys quite as much as the audience. For this scene, Terry Hands has invented some new business involving Benedick's boy-servant, a harmless and funny piece of incremental repetition. (Mr Hands has also cut the reference to "Jew" at the end of the scene, substituting "fool", a piece of textual high-handedness which seems wholly justified, except that the new term is slightly lazier in context.) Mr Jacobi plays his part in a broad and generous, almost music-hall, style, which gives a lot of incidental pleasure, though it goes with a reading of Benedick that, in keeping with the production, tends to flatten away specific traits. There's not much of the soldier here or of his latent sense of honour. And when, in the closing dance (in waltz-rhythm) he suddenly turns into a rather heavy-weight Nureyev, with Beatrice jumping him balletically into the air, the moment is farcically funny but again at the expense of the character. The proceedings seem about to dissolve into uncontrolled burlesque.

For the final moments the director settles for a tenderly romantic fade-out. Beatrice and Benedick are left far upstage, still miming their amated talk, until finding themselves alone they kiss – a long-held tableau supported by music. It's not unlike the tableau of Helena and Bertram dancing, at the end of last year's brilliant *All's Well*. But that was a her of a couple of her best moments. The "star danced" speech, on the other hand, seems taken too slowly and weightily, making it over-exposed. To release its very special brilliancy, the remark surely needs to be almost thrown away. That was how Diana Wynyard did it in the 1950s, with breath-taking effect. But Miss Cusack's pacing and timing of

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and Concept

George Bealer

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Oxford University Press

The lunatic, the lover and the poet

By Stephen Plaiice

Torquato Tasso
BBC Radio

A play that conforms to the three dramatic unities of time, place and action may actually thrive in the more restricted medium of radio. This is certainly the case with *Torquato Tasso*. In contrast to the diffuse production of *Goetz von Berlichingen* (in John Arden's version *Ironhand*) broadcast the previous week in Radio Three's Goethe season, *Tasso* is a play in a pint pot. Alan and Sandy Brownjohn's new translation manages to reproduce the clarity of Goethe's blank verse without adhering slavishly to the lumbic pentameter. This has the effect of allowing the actors, especially Michael Pennington as Tasso, room for manoeuvre between plain speech and high lyricism, so that there is never any danger of the play sounding stilted.

Even though the structure of Goethe's play is strictly classical, its subject is romantic; the madness of a poet who cannot bear the limitations of the society which fosters and celebrates him. The play demonstrates in Goethe's own words "the disproportion of talent with life". It is significant that Goethe chose to place Tasso, unlike Goetz or Faust, within such a rigid classical framework. The structure of the play is a metaphor

for the kind of ordered hermetic society in which Tasso is trapped. Just as his genius is shown to be too volatile to be confined by the manners and conventional life of the court, his romantic personality and lyrical language are continually on the verge of breaking out of the classical confines of the play. In the radio production, Michael Pennington brings this out effectively by restlessly shifting register, from lyrical fantasy to liturgical incantation to maudlin self-pity while all those around him remain more or less consistent in tone. Tasso, intoxicated by visions of the glorious heroic past and by his love for the Princess, careers around the play bumping into the mature and realistic ideas of the other members of the court who in comparison seem as stable and as solid as the pillars of a classical temple. Here the radio production actually scores over the stage versions in that the listener's mind is wholly concentrated on the language of the play with no visual distractions.

In a strictly Aristotelian play we would expect action to be reported. Goethe cheats on this convention to great effect in Tasso. There are three highly significant moments of physical action in the play which interrupt the verse. They are rendered the more powerful by their isolation. The first instance is when Tasso hands over his great poem prematurely to the Prince and reluctantly accepts a laurel wreath in return from the delighted Princess. The second, when he draws his sword on Antonio who has rebuffed his

friendship and insulted him. The third, when in his madness he molests the Princess, no longer able to confine his love for her to the courtly conventions. In all three instances, action itself is shown to be impetuous, a final resort when language fails. By choosing the classical form and yet allowing these moments of impetuous action to interrupt the play, Goethe cleverly intensifies and then disperses the emotional claustrophobia of his highly-strung poet whose feelings cannot ultimately be accommodated or tolerated by a court where the first priority is decorum. Tasso has to break the form of the play to escape. He has to get out of the strait-jacket of the verse and act. At the end of the play, as the Prince and his entourage depart after Tasso's outrage, we leave the poet holding out his arms to Antonio in an attempt to embrace him, once more about to break the conventions of classical drama.

The voices of the Prince and Princess exude benevolence. The counsels of Leonore and Antonio sound plausible enough to begin with. But there is always a ring of authenticity and integrity in Tasso's voice in this drama. It will then return for two final performances in the Oliver (June 23 and 24). Calderón's *The Mayor of Zalamea* and *One Woman Plays* by Dario Fo and Franca Rame, both Cottesloe productions by Michael Bogdanov, are to be performed at the Stage Theatre, Denver, Colorado for a two-week season from July 7 as part of the first Denver Centre World Theatre Festival. All enquiries to Lynne Kirwin, Press Office; 01-928 2033, ex 499.

Disraeli's Plagiarisms

Sir, - Benjamin Disraeli, as his enemies enjoyed pointing out, tended towards plagiarism. The best remembered example of the habit in his public life occurred in 1852, when he inserted a long extract from Thiers's twenty-year-old history of Marshal Gouvion de St Cyr without acknowledgement, into his own eloquent eulogy of the Duke of Wellington.

He practised plagiarism in his novels, too, for both frivolous and completely serious purposes, and thereby got into trouble with reviewers. There were protests, for example, when it was noticed that in *Venetia* (1837), he had made use of a familiar passage from Macaulay's essay on Byron without any direct acknowledgement. In the same controversial novel Disraeli's Shelley-like protagonist echoes almost word for word passages from the poet's own *Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients*. And one can find quite bizarre echoes in Disraeli's earlier fictions. Young Disraeli idolized Byron, and sometimes his enthusiasm took him beyond the sincere flattery. One example: in *Child Harold* the poet takes us to a bull-fight in Seville, deplores the event, and describes the bull's demise:

Slowly he falls, amidst triumphant cries. Without a groan, without a struggle dies. The decorated car appears - on high The corse is piled.

(*Child Harold*, I, 79)

Twenty years later, in his *Contarini Fleming*, Disraeli takes us to a bull-fight in Seville, deplores the event, and describes the death of his bull:

he falls amid thundering shouts. The death is instantaneous without a struggle, and without a groan. A car, decorated with flowers and ribbons, drawn by oxen, now appears, and bears off the body in triumph.

(*Contarini Fleming*, Pt V Ch 5)

What is one to make of such trifling borrowings? Innocent inadvertence? Deliberate homage to the Master? A private joke? An impulse following Geoffrey Grigson's line (Letters, April 16) - to make mugs of publishers and reviewers? As so often with Disraeli one is left with a (fairly comic) puzzle.

Yet *Sybil* is quite another matter. Here, as is well known, Disraeli borrowed and re-worked from Parliamentary Blue Books painful and moving documentation of the sufferings of the poor in urban and rural

England. The method met with some critical complaint at the time, but it is generally recognized that he was able to use that material in a serious way to dramatize and present the realities of this suffering to a wide readership.

Isn't this, *mutatis mutandis*, the equivalent of what D. M. Thomas has attempted in *The White Hotel*, in borrowing and re-working the *Babi Yar* material to present his account of terrible human suffering in the most serious fashion?

Geoffrey Grigson says that "this new method of writing - insults literature, makes mugs of publishers and reviewers". Well, the method hardly seems new (Disraeli, for example, surely expected his readers to recognize the provenance of his borrowings in *Sybil*), and something in Mr Grigson's tone reminds me that *The Times*, in 1852, commenting on the Wellington-eulogy furore, remarked: "A cry of 'Stop' from the literati was roused, and a whole pack of jealous litterateurs were immediately on the scent of their offending, and perhaps too successful, brother."

BERNARD McCABE, Department of English, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts 02155.

Darwin and Rosas

Sir, - In his review (April 23) of John Lynch's biography *Argentine Dictator: Juan Manuel de Rosas 1829-1852*, Malcolm Deas asserts that W. H. Hudson's "portrait in colours" has been "hitherto the only one likely to be encountered by the literate Englishman". Hudson's memoir *Far Away and Long Ago* has indeed been published in several editions, but it contains only a few pages of reflections on the character of the dictator Rosas, whose buffoon had been glimpsed briefly by Hudson when he was a child.

However, "the literate Englishman" is much more likely to have read Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches* (on the voyage of the *Beagle*), which has appeared in innumerable editions since its first publication in 1839 (and to which Eric Korn refers in your issue of April 30). Chapter 4 of that classic book, Darwin described vividly his encounter in Patagonia with General Rosas, who was then (in 1833) engaged in a deliberate campaign to exterminate the Patagonian Indians. The savagery of that campaign horrified Darwin, but he was much im-

pressed by Rosas, and wrote that "he is a man of an extraordinary character, and has a most predominant influence in the country, which it seems probable he will use to its prosperity and advancement". But, in the second edition (1845), Darwin inserted a footnote: "This prophecy has turned out entirely and miserably wrong." Moreover, Darwin reported his conversation with one of Rosas's two buffoons, who told how Rosas had once become irritated with him and had brutally tortured him.

Perhaps England might be improved by returning the remains of General Rosas to his homeland.

G. J. TEE, Department of Civil and Municipal Engineering, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1.

Wallace Stevens

Sir, - May I offer a small aside to Frank Kermode's letter (April 23)? Wallace Stevens is known to have dictated poems to his secretary in his Hartford insurance office for typed transcription; and she may have used Pitman's shorthand. If this was so, the *pastiched* difficulty in "Like Decorations in the Nigger Cemetery", XXVI, may be further extended. The shorthand outline for the two words is identical since there is no written symbol for vowels. The placing of the outline in relation to the first vowel: *passtiche* through the line, *passtiche* through it. A conscientious and accurate stenographer will make a clear distinction. Therefore, in the apparent absence of manuscripts, recourse to her notes would determine Stevens's original intention. Inaccuracy during dictation may, clearly, lead to error and the need for the poet's correction. (But supposing he dictated *passtiche* she, uncertain, typed *passtiche*; he corrected to *passtiche* - on the evidence of the typescript, what was his intention?)

In view of this, may there not be scope for fruitful research in several PhDs at least - into the fraught area of the effects of shorthand transcription on contemporary literature?

C. A. C. STOUT, 149 Woolstone Road, London SE23.

Social Anthropology

Sir, - Maurice Bloch in his review of Edmund Leach's *Social Anthropology* (April 16) makes the very thought-provoking observation that "somehow a substitute for enquiry into historical origins". I did not know that it was necessary to find a been discarded as useless, nor do I know of any thinker who has seen a radical change of interest in that way. Malinowski thought the antiquarian search for origins, which at best could be only pseudo-historical, was a futile pursuit. He found it more fruitful to ask Simmel's question "What makes society possible?" and seek the answer in observable behaviour. That his answer was very different from Simmel's is for the moment neither here nor there. In the face of opposition from his own students he soon modified the untenable position that all history was irrelevant, and admitted that "the past that lives in the present" - that is the results of recent and knowable history - deserved study, but his insistence that history was not the anthropologist's central interest set the study on a new course which it has maintained to this day, even though many of today's anthropologists pursue lines of enquiry quite different from his.

LUCY MAIR, 19 Hallgate, Blackheath Park, London SE3.

'Mrs L'

Sir, - Alastair Forbes in his review of my book, *Mrs L: Conversations with Alice Roosevelt Longworth* (March 12), is quite wrong in assuming that the picture of the lady in-arm with Eleonora Sears on page 15 is in fact Mrs Longworth herself. I don't know who it is but it is certainly not Mrs L, who was never, to the best of my knowledge, photographed arm-in-arm with anyone in her life.

MICHAEL N. TEAGUE, 920 South Carolina Avenue SE, Washington DC 20003.

Joseph Hall

Sir, - May I be permitted to correct a correction of Christopher Hill's in his review of *Another World and Yet the Same* by Bishop Joseph Hall (April 16)? Joseph Hall was neither parson of Hawshead in Essex nor Halstead in Essex, but was incumbent of Hawshead in Suffolk, near Bury St Edmunds. His patron was Sir Robert Drury of Hawshead, who also had strong links of patronage and friendship with John Donne; see R. C. Bald's study of *John Donne and the Drurys* (Cambridge, 1957).

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MICHAEL BUTLER's *The Novels of Max Pritch* was published in 1979.

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LORD CARVAL's books include *The War Lords*, 1976, and *The Apostles of Mobility*, 1979.

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KYRIE FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

DAVID GARROVING's *Collected Poems 1936-37* was published in 1980.

JULIAN JEFFS is the author of *Sherry*, first published in 1961 and recently reissued.

EMRYS JONES is the author of *The Origins of Shakespeare*, 1977.

ROBIN LAW's *The Oro Empire 1600-1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* was published in 1977.

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WILLIAM WATSON is Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology at the University of London. His *Art of Dynastic China* will be published shortly.

BARBARA WEDGWOOD's *The Wedgwood Circle 1730-1897* was published in 1978.

G. M. WILSON is Deputy Master of the Armouries at the Tower of London.

Rescuing the infant

By Peter Lomas

VICTORIA HAMILTON: *Narcissus and Oedipus The Children of Psychoanalysis* 313pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.50. 0 7100 0869 4

In Freud's view a baby is not an exploratory being, open to the world, reaching out with interest and delight towards his mother, capable of love and playfulness, keen to grow and improve his talents. Rather, he begins life in a state of "primary narcissism": that is to say, his aim is to turn back to conditions akin to those in the womb; he seeks only the gratification of his instinctual, physical desires, centred, at this stage, on the mouth, and experiences life in terms of an omnipotent fantasy in which the outer world does not exist.

Those of us who work in the fields of psychoanalysis or child development have become so accustomed to this conception - one so remote from common sense and the intuitive experience of mothers - that we often forget how strange and pessimistic it is. Where on earth, one wonders, did Freud get hold of such an absurd notion? It has proved a durable one within the psychoanalytical movement.

As Victoria Hamilton notes, in the historical survey of the vicissitudes of the theory to which she devotes a large part of her admirable *Narcissus and Oedipus*, "The idea of a primary, affectional bond and of an intense, loving relationship between mother and infant was (in the 1930s), and still is to-day, novel to the psychoanalytical theory of early infancy." Indeed, two of the most revered and quoted analysts of the contemporary scene, Heinz Kohut and Margaret Mahler, base their influential work on elaborations of the theory.

The attempt to escape towards a saner view of these matters has, however, been under way for quite a long time now. So much of this work has been done in England that those analysts engaged in it have come to be known collectively as the English School, and their ideas are designated by the unfortunate and misleading term "object-relations theory". The best-known figures in this field - those on whom Hamilton focuses - are Klein, Balint, Bowlby and Winnicott (rather surprisingly she fails to discuss the important contribution of W. R. D. Fairbairn).

The project has by no means proved straightforward, and some thinkers who have sought to rescue the infant from his solitary confinement have emerged with drastic measures which hardly improve his position. Most notable in this respect is Melanie Klein, who sees the child as greedy, insatiable, hostile, and, if he is not a stranger to love, pushed reluctantly into reality by means of anxiety and remorse for his cannibalistic impulses. The picture is, in its own way, as dreadful, pessimistic, and bizarre as that of Freud. It is not until the advent of Michael Balint, a pupil of Freud's close friend and colleague, Sandor Ferenczi, that a breath of fresh air enters the baby's lungs. Balint still underrated today, he derived his ideas from the analysis of adult patients; recognizing the patient's need for a "human response" - a kind word, a touch, a smile - he came to believe that the cannibalistic ferocities of the Kleinian patient were, at least to some extent, artificial reactions to a deprivation of reasonable warmth from the analyst, and that the Kleinian baby was a myth.

Hamilton concludes her survey with a detailed account of John Bowlby's "Attachment theory" and the experimental psychologist's notion of "interactional synchronicity", which focuses on the subtle cues which mother and baby give to each other and emphasizes the latter's history moves; in addition, she gives us a reinterpretation of the myths of Narcissus and Echo and of Winnicott's concept of "transitional object". This is all worth reading, but one has, at times, the impression

that a quart is being put into a pint pot.

It is encouraging that in the fields of psychoanalysis and child development we are moving, however painfully and gradually, into a less mechanistic idea of infantile experience, a view that is more in accord with common sense and one which will be welcomed by those of us who are still sufficiently optimistic to believe in the existence and value of love. It would appear that science, in particular biological science, had led us badly astray in our understanding of the experiences and aims of the mother and child, and that the cost has been great. There are signs, however, that a period of self-correction has set in, and observations are now being made which show the baby to be more intricate, more sophisticated, more communicative and more "human" than the professionals - as opposed to the man and woman in the street - had come to believe. Clearly we should not entirely turn our backs on the scientists; but we should treat their findings with the utmost caution, especially when they fly in the face of the intuitive experience gained in everyday life.

In the latter part of *Narcissus and Oedipus* Victoria Hamilton enlarges her scope to include the problems facing the older child, and, in particular, his search for and retreat from truth. She begins with a reassessment of the Oedipus myth. Although she accepts Freud's thesis, quoting with approval Jocasta's attempt to comfort Oedipus with the words "How many men, in dreams, have lain with their mothers!", she regards *Oedipus Rex* as a tale about particular failure rather than general, inevitable tragedy. It has more to do with a terrible search for knowledge than a sexual crime. Oedipus has no chance because he lives in the middle of deception. "Disaster follows from unilateral actions taken at the expense of communication of information."

Armed with her interpretation of the myths of Narcissus and Oedipus and her critique of the theories of child development, Hamilton then goes on to consider man's search for knowledge, and we come to the most challenging part of the book. There the origins and growth of knowledge: the tragic vision, in which knowledge and pain are inseparable; and a holy curiosity (the quotation is from Pascal's *Pensées* and, more recently, in the writings of the post-Kleinian analyst Wilfred Bion. Bion is a writer with an obscurity equal to that of Jacques Lacan, with an oracular style and a flair for memorable and sometimes profound statements, who has captured the imagination of many analysts on both sides of the Atlantic; and Hamilton has done well to transmit his message with such coherence in the space of a short chapter.

Bion follows Freud in connecting the origins of thinking with absence

and frustration. One thinks of a desperate measure to get rid of (to evacuate) painful or excessive stimuli. Bion, following Klein, relates the development of the most primitive thought to feeding. The first thought, however, is the absence of the breast.

The corollary to Freud's theory of the origins of thinking as a response to frustration and absence is that knowledge evolves in a state of isolation, deprivation and introspection. In Bion's view, these are the conditions to which the psychoanalytic setting should approximate. Since deprivation is painful, so is knowledge. The analyst does not want to know. Only suffering will lead to true knowledge.

While acknowledging that there is something to be said for this stern approach to life, Hamilton criticizes its all-or-nothing character. A person with this vision lives in a world of extremes. It is bad enough if the patient suffers from such a disability, but even more of a problem if it is also the way that the analyst thinks. That we can never know the whole truth is a proposition that most of us accept without difficulty. But Bion's all-or-nothing way of formulating it has unfortunate practical implications:

The personal humility, which Bion projects in his declarations of his belief that man may know nothing, nevertheless may foster a belief in his audience that somewhere, "hidden", there is a truth which we

could find if only we would stop talking and, therefore, lying. It is but a short step to the notion that beyond the man, the mere manifestation, lurks the god, the bearer of truth in the ineffable interpretation.

By contrast, "holy curiosity" stands, in humility and awe, before the mysteries of eternity. Recognizing the relative, if profound, limitations of knowledge, it is more realistic. In terms of developmental theory, the infant seeks "near-continual proximity, togetherness, mutuality and synchrony, but these goals are very different to the wish for a womb-like fusion, as described in primary narcissism". The child must accept that there is an objective order of things that he will never completely understand or control, and he will be helped to tolerate this if, as Winnicott emphasized, he is enabled to feel safe in the ambiguous area of play.

Although Hamilton has little to say explicitly about the practice of psychoanalysis, her views leave one in no doubt that - as in other aspects of life - the importance of the helper's capacity to avoid rigidity and tolerate ambiguity, to seek out the other with trust and confidence, and to encourage mutuality in a spirit of openness are paramount in any endeavour to heal. For this reason she has done a service to those of us who rely for the most part on our therapeutic work on intuition, but who are, at times, afflicted with the fear that we are merely naive.

anatomy is overwhelming, and there is little doubt that these differences are biological rather than cultural.

One of Jung's central hypotheses is that the psyche is self-regulating. Just as the body "knows" what is right for it, and possesses a number of cybernetic mechanisms which ensure that the internal environment is kept within definite limits, so the psyche seeks its own equilibrium, a balance between the opposing forces of which it is constituted. Jung believed that there was a natural and proper path of development for each individual. Neurotic symptoms were often indicators that hubris or a failure to assume responsibility and face life's challenges had interfered with the individual's development, or made him stray from his proper path. Dreams and other manifestations of spontaneous psychic activity were often compensatory: efforts on the part of the psyche to restore a balance which had been lost. It is easy to show that mental health depends upon an equilibrium between opposites: for instance, between dependence and independence, domination and submission, divergence and convergence, or sensuality and spirituality. Stevens makes the interesting suggestion that this duality is reflected in the different functions of the two cerebral hemispheres, which are now well established by neurological research. Jung's concept of the psyche as seeking integration, of trying to achieve a balance between opposites may have

as its basis the fact that the right and left hemispheres have different functions, or one might put it colloquially, different "attitudes to life".

The notion of archetypes at first raises the hope that, at some time in the future, we may be able to delineate the basic nature of man as a species: to portray his biological and psychological characteristics, needs, drives, and endowments as fundamental realities underlying the variations which different cultures impose as superstructures. Men, like languages, are variable; but the difficulty is, as Stevens realizes, that archetypes operate at a Kantian boundary which we cannot cross. If archetypes govern our notions of space and time, as well as of the meaning of life, as Jung supposed, only a Martian or a god can see them for what they are. Jung, influenced by Schopenhauer, did actually postulate that archetypes existed in a realm outside our subjective categories of space and time, but Stevens wisely omits discussion of these obscure aspects of Jung's thought.

What he has done, clearly and convincingly, is to demonstrate that many of Jung's ideas are closely linked with modern research in a variety of fields, and that to dismiss Jung as a mystic or a visionary prophet is misguided. Jung was not a good exponent of his own ideas, but I recommend Dr Stevens's book as one of the best available introductions to his thought and its practical applications.

Monty Python Complete and Utter Theory of the Grotesque Edited by John G. Thompson When Monty Python's Flying Circus erupted onto the small screen in 1969 it was hailed as something completely different - at least as far as television was concerned. But the form of humour and grotesque which the Pythons introduced to television has a long and varied history in literature and art, from the writing of Rabelais to the nightmare visions of Bosch. Thompson combines interviews with the Pythons and press responses to their work with a broad spectrum of critical and historical material to offer a remarkable set of insights into the development of humorous and grotesque art forms. £2.00 0 6310 119 1 50pp 21x25 025701203 54pp

Television and the Riots By Howard Tomber How wide the effects of television's coverage of the riots in Summer 1968? This first report from the Broadcasting Research Unit of the BBC finds that there is no convincing evidence to support claims that television produced a "cooling effect" in which people were held back from violence by watching news coverage of the riots. However, it does conclude that the media have failed to understand and report adequately the social situation out of which the riots developed. "Broadcasters should thank Howard Tomber for a welcome exercise in reason." David Cox: Television Today. £1.85 0 6310 119 1 50pp 21x25 025701203 54pp

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PUBLISHERS

Posthumous palaces

By William Watson

ANN PALUDAN:
The Imperial Ming Tombs
251pp. 31 colour and 238 black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £24.50.
0 300 02511 4

The Valley of the Thirteen Tombs, forty-five kilometres to the north-west of Peking, is sparsely populated farming land and many of its natural attractions are still unspoiled. Ann Paludan was able to wander and picnic there in the early 1970s as a privileged diplomatic person accompanied only by her friends and family. With disarming sincerity and a fluent pen, she gives a lucid account of the architecture, improving upon descriptions given in the early decades of the century, in books long unobtainable, by French and Belgian engineers and scholars. These writers were detached and technical, while their predecessor De Groot, whose *Religious System of China* was published in 1864, had investigated the ritual aspects of the tombs while gloomily commenting on the dilapidation of the funeral-halls and shrines of the emperors. Recently the Chinese authorities have undertaken the restoration of some of the tombs - notably the fully excavated Tomb Ling of the Wan Li emperor - but others are still ruinous and difficult of access, glimpsed by the visitor across the valley through the shimmering summer air.

Like many a Tang poet, Mrs Paludan loves the melancholy of grass-grown ruins haunted by vanished dynasties (hardly a sentiment encouraged by the tourist put-rough of the present day) and the ease with which she presents dense fact, accompanied always by imaginative notice of nature and art, makes like a poet. Her book is a masterpiece of what in other hands might have been dry repetition. The Hsian-t'ang emperor's tomb, unexcavated since 1326, and particularly decrepit, is "small but elegant, a sort of Petit Trianon". The second courtyard of the Cheng-tung tomb is "one of the most beautiful places in the whole valley", and Hung-chih's is

a "sad tomb". Birds, flowers and trees are noted. Of the Chia-ching tomb:

Here the trees are mixed. A very tall lace-barked pine, *Pinus bungeana*, is growing just in front of the right-hand corner of the first terrace; to the left is a large oak-tree, a *Quercus acutissima*, and on the terrace itself are thujas and other small bushes. . . . For most of the year the courtyard is filled with wild flowers. The first to appear in the spring are violets, wild iris, and anemones; then come bluebells, a sort of orange lily, honeysuckle, wild raspberries, delphiniums, and an occasional fritillary. In the autumn it is thick with wild pink chrysanthemums and pale mauve asters. In winter Hawthornes, Bramblings, and Rosefinches abound in the grass in the spring Willow Warblers in the trees.

The plan of each tomb comprises essentially one to three walled forecourts according to dignity, facing south and backed by a great mound usually planted with trees. The largest precincts, of three courtyards, have a triple entrance; a Gate of Heavenly Favours gives access to the second court in which stands the Sacrificial Hall, and thence another leads to the innermost court, where stand a protective screen (to baulk straight-travelling evil spirits), an altar for placing large censers, and the back a tall and broad pavilion is the stele on which are inscribed the emperor's titles, and extending beyond the tower is the mound, usually surrounded by a reneled top. Under the mound (as we now know from the excavated Tomb Ling) are the vaulted stone galls the Emperor lies with his wives. Mrs Paludan's descriptions of the palaces, from the Ch'ing-ling of Yung-lo to the smallest, suitably unassuming site of the last emperor Ch'ing-chen, each description supported by dozens of photographs, build a most memorable picture, with much fuller attention being given to the stone-mason's art and to drainage than has appeared in print before.



Originally an illustration to Mrs A. Little's *Round About My Peking Garden*, this photograph of the Spirit Road taken in about 1900 is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

On drainage her observations are quite original. The problem of removing excess water - subsoil water as well as rain - could be solved, on larger natural or contrived channels within the perimeter walls. But no pools or streams were included in the funeral precincts, and the system of culverts included in the tomb masonry was evidently improved with each structure. The job was done thoroughly, the openings of hidden conduits were prettily shaped, and all are of impressive solidity, contrasting with the comparative frailty of the timber-framed

The buildings at the tombs are among the most important architectural monuments of China, where surviving buildings of any earlier date are extremely few. The combination of treacherous structure with stone and brick walling is characteristic of the period, corresponding closely to the designs developed in the course of Yung-lo's rebuilding of the perimeter of the Peking palace and of the buildings of the Forbidden City. Mrs Paludan deftly introduces enough architectural history to vindicate the importance of the funeral edifices, but her forte is the observation of detail of carved and shaped stone, whether in place or lying derelict in the grass. This record will contribute more to a work that is still to be undertaken - the history of architectural ornament from the time of the Yuan palace of Peking to the era of imperial extravagance, when European baroque in his Yuan-yuan. The evolution of sculpture in the round (the figures of soldiers and ministers, mythical and real animals) and relief carving (on steles, stairway slopes, along the foundations of buildings) begins at the founder

emperor Hung-wu's tomb, situated on the edge of Nanking, so that the connection with the Peking palace style follows later. The carving is still splendid in the seventeenth century at the Sze-ling of Ch'ing-chen. We are warned of the presence of Ch'ing dynasty restoration even in artistic detail - this too is a question calling for more research, or for more pictures of Mrs Paludan's kind, should that ever prove possible again.

Its distinguished photographs, the fullness of the architectural record, and not least its judicious summary of ritual, symbolism and the emperor's history (here given some political substance), together with the illustrations of birds in the tomb, endow this book with an unusual triple claim: on the high-minded tourist, on the ornithologist and on the art historian - and most permanently perhaps on the last.

Arlecchino and Co

By Barbara Wedgwood

PETER BRADSHAW:
18th Century English Porcelain Figures 1745-1795
327pp. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club. £25.
0 902028 83 9

Reference books about ceramics are seldom read - as distinct from looked at - for pleasure. Usually they are prominently displayed on bookshelves or coffee tables and only occasionally consulted for information. The photographs are usually enjoyed, as if one were passing time in a museum before some more important appointment. *18th Century English Porcelain Figures* is a delightful exception. The author has broken with the tradition that such books must be amateurishly written, and apparently designed to discourage all but the most dedicated students of minutiae. The book's interest extends beyond the boundaries of the field, and it will be useful to collectors of Wedgwood or Meissen or Oriental porcelain, as well as eighteenth-century English figures.

Peter Bradshaw's style is plain, concise and unobtrusive. The organization of the book is admirable, with the emphasis where it should be, on the history and identification of the ware. Attention is rightly given to the great contribution made by Meissen, which has sometimes been ignored or undervalued by English specialists. The final, somewhat lumped together chapter on "Reproduction, Fakes, Restoration and Collecting" is the least successful. The generalized comments in two pages on collecting seem strangely

out of keeping with the conscientious scholarship of the rest of the book. Of course tastes change in antiquities as in modern decorative objects or anything else, and the observation that, depending upon quality, scarcity, condition and place of purchase, a figure may be bought for as little as £25 or as much as £10,000, is not of much use to anyone. No doubt the author felt that some summary of prices should be given, but this sort of information is more appropriate in annual directories which specialize in analysing market trends.

On the whole, however, this is a minor quibble. If I have any broader criticism it is that more illustrations of Meissen, and of French prototypes from which the English models were derived, should have been included, and that versions of the same subject, made by rival factories (for example, *Arlecchino* or the *Four Seasons*) might have been grouped together so that differences might be more easily grasped. Undoubtedly some figures could not be distinguished from their prototypes in a black-and-white photograph, but many could; and such a rearrangement would save the reader considerable thumbing back and forth from one section to another. The subject of eighteenth-century porcelain figures has not been exhausted. Perhaps Mr Bradshaw will give us another, more specialized volume on Meissen prototypes and their English derivatives.

Robert G. Sawers Publishing, Linford House, Linford Street, London SW8, have recently published *The Prints of Paul Jaconet* by Richard Miles (140pp. £20, paperback £15, available from the publishers. 0 903697 14 9). The volume, which is a complete illustrated catalogue of the artist's work, has been published to coincide with an exhibition at the Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena.

GERMANY

Resistance in the Ruhr

By Tim Mason

DETLEV PEUKERT:
Die KPD im Widerstand
Verfolgung und Untergrundarbeit am Rhein und Ruhr 1933 bis 1945
460pp. Wuppertal: Hammer.
3 87294 1658

This book marks a very large advance in our understanding of German Communism. First it rests upon a much broader basis of source materials than any other study of the KPD in the years 1928 to 1945: the author has been through an immense variety of police files in East and West German archives, has combed the Party's voluminous publications (legal and illegal, exile and underground), and has spoken at length with old-timers now in their sixties and seventies about their experiences in the struggle against Nazism.

The second reason why Detlev Peukert's study makes such an important contribution has more to do with his qualities as a political author: he has approached his difficult subject with just the right kind of critical sympathy. He gained access to some internal party records and episodes in the Party's history which are presented by communist historians as examples of heroic fixity of purpose and by liberal historians as instances of bureaucratic blindness or inhumanity are revealed here as having a complex intelligibility. Peukert is himself near enough to the KPD to bring out the fierce loyalties and solidarities, the militant anti-fascist spirit, the distinctive combination of defiance and decency which mark the activities of the stable core of its membership; he is also far enough away from the Party to present a lucid analysis of the hopelessness of its political position in the crisis of 1933-35, of its consequent failures in resistance, the hopes of the militants for a "Social Germany" in these years are accessible to his (and thus to our) sympathy, and the fundamental absurdity of such a strategy is at the same time clarified. Peukert makes it understandable that many sensible communists should have regarded the Social Democratic Party and the Free Trade Unions with bit-

ter distrust after 1928, and also brings out in sharp relief the utter futility of a policy which not only gave free rein to such sentiments but actually sharpened and mobilized them. Peukert presents the Communist Party before January 1933 as a large embattled encampment, in which the energies and rhetoric of functionaries and activists were necessarily turned inwards on the tasks of expanding the organization and maintaining morale, rather than outwards towards the rapidly changing contours of the national political crisis which was about to envelop them. While brief references here to the Boers is a less than happy analogy, the basic point is brilliantly made and it illuminates all stages of the Party's development until it was forced in 1935 to consider every aspect of its strategy and tactics. From 1928 until 1935 German Communists were basically addressing each other only (and Russian Communists). The language and tactics of "class against class", the emphasis upon the need to break Social Democracy as a pre-condition for the defeat of Nazism, represented a kind of collective monologue. It was only the sharp growth in electoral support for the Party in the years 1928-32, growth which, as Peukert demonstrates, was much more marked than the parallel growth in organizational strength, which sustained the illusion that German Communism was engaged in a real combative dialogue with other political forces. Elsewhere in Europe "Third Period" Communism was a practical failure in every respect, and Party leaders knew it. But in Germany, the strategy gained both votes and a new, though highly volatile, membership. Morale was high - in a political situation which called in 1932 for the most sober scepticism, and for the articulation of high militancy with tactical stiffness and flexibility. But scepticism and flexibility could only have grown out of a real political dialogue.

The Party was literally smashed in the spring of 1933. Peukert's account of how this was done is by far the best in the historical literature. The Nazi terror was both feline and crude, both highly organized and utterly wild, ruthlessly competent in some towns and quite incompetent in others. The fact that it was carried out by a reconstructed centralized party bureaucracy turned into an almost unmitigated disaster, the acquisition of one key piece of evidence by the police could enable the Gestapo to "roll up" complete chains of command and networks of cells. It was a bit like a fascist grouse-shoot: the role of the "beaters" was played by those who, out of fear, opportunism or the desire to settle a personal score, denounced to the police anyone who was behaving in a politically suspicious manner; and the guns were in the hands not of the social and political élites themselves, but of their low-profiled and increasingly professional police hunters. One of the original reasons why Lenin had forced a centralized cadre organization in the Bolshevik Party was his concern to respond appropriately to the Tsarist police. The KPD's mechanical dedication to the principles of Leninism thirty years later and in an utterly different society was to cost its members dear. During the years 1934 and 1935 arrests were made in batches of hundreds. Beatings and torture were followed by penitentiary, concentration-camp, execution. Assemblies at funerals became the only form of public gathering for communists.

One of the great strengths of a well-considered regional study is that it requires a consistent background discussion of the problems of national leadership; local studies all too often omit this dimension. Peukert skillfully integrates an analysis of the change in Communist policies in 1934-36 into his minute reconstruction of events in the Ruhr. Six of the leading underground functionaries from the Ruhr spoke at the "Russels" conference of the KPD in October 1935 in Moscow, where the shift to a Popular Front strategy was finalized (and four of them then remained abroad with the exiled leadership of the party). Peukert's analysis of the incompleteness and ultimate failure of this policy switch is masterly. He discusses the high-level ideological and strategic issues with great precision; he is alert to the reveals the vital roots of Heinrich Böll's unique mixture of radical protest and moral conservatism but succeeds in "whetting" the appetite for more.

Some of the sharpest comments are reserved for schoolmasters in Böll's humanist Gymnasium, including not only the spineless who drifted with the tide but also one memorable eccentric who gave his pupils turgid passages of *Mein Kampf* to précis, an act of *lese-majesté* which inexplicably eluded the otherwise vigilant authorities. What comes over most clearly is Böll's sense of moral outrage at the brutal invasion of his childhood. With controlled bitterness he describes in detail the constant economic problems which distorted everyday life, in his close-knit family (which worried - as the title indicates - incessantly about the young Heinrich's prospects), and he brilliantly conveys the air of doom which hung over this great Catholic city whose historic physiognomy was in turn so crudely disguised by the ubiquitous swastika flag.

This succinct memoir not only reveals the vital roots of Heinrich Böll's unique mixture of radical protest and moral conservatism but succeeds in "whetting" the appetite for more.

Catholics is easier to talk about in Moscow than to practise in Bochum, or who are appalled by the adoption of the trojan-horse tactic because there are no circumstances which can justify communists joining Nazi organizations. (On points of this kind, Peukert's account is vitally enriched by his conversations with old-timers.)

The story is not an unrelieved catalogue of failure. The problem was that every major success of the communist underground made an ultimate failure both more likely and more disastrous. During the latter half of 1934, for example, groups of communists and socialists of various persuasions made a determined and skillful effort to set up a united underground trade union organization in Wuppertal. Although the official Party line still left little space for initiatives of this kind, the responsible functionary in the region, a woman called Elli Schmidt, gave it her support. Discontent in the city's factories increased, pressures were exerted on basic issues of wages and hours of work. In January 1935, the Gestapo finally moved in and arrested 1,200 people at one fell swoop; half of them were condemned after massive show trials.

Peukert brings out very sharply the effectiveness of the Gestapo in cutting off the dwindling underground cadres from their social contacts, by making demonstrative resistance activities so self-defeating. The police terror was above all preventive. From 1936 to 1941 it drove communists in the Ruhr back in on themselves, and made the maintenance of group contacts and loyalties appear as supreme ends in themselves. The reports of double-agents whom the police infiltrated into such informal groups stressed the sense of impotence among the remaining communists. They did not know what to do with the anger and hatred. They could express their solidarity in the form of support for the families of arrested comrades and support for the *Republikanische Kampf* in Spain, but they felt incapable of attacking the Nazi régime in a way which would really damage it - without exposing themselves and their friends to probable immediate and terrible retribution.

This sense of impotence is the one aspect of the problem which Peukert does not explore in a sufficiently systematic manner. It was not the only possible response to the overwhelming odds against which the KPD-underground was working: one lone German cabinet-maker did almost succeed in assassinating Hitler in November 1939, and in 1944 groups of proletarian teenagers, army deserters and foreign slaves forced a centralized cadre organization in the Bolshevik Party was his concern to respond appropriately to the Tsarist police. The KPD's mechanical dedication to the principles of Leninism thirty years later and in an utterly different society was to cost its members dear. During the years 1934 and 1935 arrests were made in batches of hundreds. Beatings and torture were followed by penitentiary, concentration-camp, execution. Assemblies at funerals became the only form of public gathering for communists.

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After the German invasion of Russia, the communist resistance in the Ruhr re-grouped. Under the inspiration and leadership of Wilhelm Knechtel new networks were established. Most of the activists were by now of the older generation, and many of them knew the inside of a concentration-camp. Young new recruits to the cause were few and far between, and the revived organizations were on a much smaller scale than those of 1933-35. However, in their duplicated newsletter, "The Peace Fighters", Knechtel and his comrades produced some of the most significant political statements of the

TLS MAY 7 1982: 513

Mural heroics

By Mary Boyce

GUILTY AZARPAY:
Sogdian Painting
With contributions by A. M. Bellenit, B. I. Marshak, and Mark J. Dresden
212pp. University of California Press. £40.
0 520 03765 0

Ancient Sogdian, now part of Soviet Central Asia, was once an Iranian land whose culture, long since obliterated by alien conquerors Arab, Turk and Mongol, is gradually being rediscovered this century by archaeologists. All its products, whether buildings, manuscripts, or the wall-paintings which are the chief subject of this book, survive only in damaged form; but from them remains a picture has been won of a very attractive civilization, distinctive, vigorous, but refined, with its wealth, Sogdian merchants, traded with east and west, for this land lay upon the silk route and also the "for the Northern Urals and Byzantium. From the third to the eighth centuries AD - broadly the period in which the book is concerned - Sogdian was repeatedly subjugated, by Persians from the south and nomads from the north; but it retained its own language and culture under the leadership of local princes.

The main themes of the wall-paintings which decorated their temples and palaces, and the dwellings of their wealthier subjects, were heroic epics, of which only episodes from the Rustam cycle are generally known. There are also paintings of religious subjects and of contempor-

ary secular ones, with accurate delineations of embassies from the Chinese and the Turks, and of Arab siege-engines, while in less conspicuous positions there are charming naturalistic illustrations of popular tales and legends. The Sogdians evidently had a rich oral literature of entertainment, reflected in vivid narrative art.

All this is admirably analysed and set out, for the first time fully for English readers, in the present book. This falls into two parts, of which the first consists of a short but useful general introduction by Mark Dresden, and a long chapter on "The Paintings of Sogdiana", translated from the Russian of A. M. Bellenit and B. I. Marshak, who write with the authority of those who have studied the materials in the field. This chapter includes observations on the chronology, subject-matter, and style of the paintings. The second part, by Guilty Azarpay, is concerned with the treatment and the types of heroic and legendary figures; details of costume and armour; religious imagery; the technique of the paintings; and the continuity of the tradition down into Islamic times. There is some overlap between the three contributions, with one or two unresolved minor questions, but the book is for specialists, and this might have made an even better book if Dr Azarpay had chosen to write a wholly independent and homogeneous study of her own.

Among the most puzzling paintings are the religious ones. Buddhist, Manichaean, and Nestorian Christianity all won converts among the Sogdians; but Dr Azarpay quotes the eminent Russian scholar, V. A.

Livshits, to the effect that in the end the Sogdians held to their own traditional faith of "Mazdaism" - ie Zoroastrianism. This conclusion certainly seems supported by the data, although one has to accept, as Azarpay shows, that Sogdian iconography has a special local character, having undergone Indian and Central Asian influences (whereas the Sogdians of Persia shows influences of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece). Dr Azarpay herself sees in dominance of pre-Zoroastrian Iranian elements; but this is because she measures it against the religion of the Avesta and Pahlavi books, and takes as unZoroastrian any beliefs and practices not represented there. It is now known, however, that the surviving literature by no means records all beliefs and observances of Zoroastrians down the ages. Dr Azarpay's special study of the goddess Nana in Sogdian is well documented; but there is some confusion in her treatment of Nana and Anahita, and her original hypothesis that in Central Asia Nana (linked in Mesopotamia with the Iranian Spenta Armaiti (humanity of the earth)) is bold but not quite soundly based. It touches, however, on many interesting points.

The work is admirably presented, with thirty colour plates and many line-drawings; and the treatment throughout is scholarly, clear and illuminating. This book provides an Iranian culture, which, flourishing with other civilizations from China to Rome, and both borrowed from and gave to them. It makes accordingly a notable contribution not only to Iranian studies but to the history of art and civilization in a number of lands.

A childhood invaded

By Michael Butler

HEINRICH BÖLL:
Was soll aus dem Jungen bloss werden?
96pp. Bornheim: Lamuv. DM19.80.
3 921521 31 9

This short book represents Heinrich Böll's first venture into straight autobiography, a form he has always distrust for its tendency to distort the past in terms of contemporary prejudices. To avoid such subjectivity Böll concentrates on just four crucial years of his life: 1933-37. These were his last years of schooling and coincided, of course, with Hitler's assumption of total power. The strength and fascination of Böll's recollections stem not in any broad historical sweep but in their very narrowness of focus which effectively highlights the impact of Nazism on his family and on their small corner of Cologne.

Böll's aim is not to construct an accurate chronology but to re-create an authentically as possible the oppressive atmosphere and circumstances of these critical years in which he and his family felt themselves to be particularly vulnerable. Yet despite an undisguised antipathy towards Nazism which was "concrete and insensitive, aesthetic and political", Böll surprisingly records that such attitudes caused him no direct difficulties at school. Indeed, he and two fellow-pupils (out of two hundred) even refused to join the Hitler Youth and suffered no serious consequences for such a conspicuous lack of national fervour.

Nevertheless, these few pages accurately trace the increasing tension in the city, the unpredictable dangers on streets dominated by SA thugs, the diminishing scope for even minimal opposition. Thus despite the deep hatred of the Bölls for the arrogant masters of Germany, it was thought prudent at a family council to elect one of the number to become a token member of the SA - an economically imperative compromise for which Böll's luckless uncle never forgave the rest of the family.

Some of the sharpest comments are reserved for schoolmasters in Böll's humanist Gymnasium, including not only the spineless who drifted with the tide but also one memorable eccentric who gave his pupils turgid passages of *Mein Kampf* to précis, an act of *lese-majesté* which inexplicably eluded the otherwise vigilant authorities. What comes over most clearly is Böll's sense of moral outrage at the brutal invasion of his childhood. With controlled bitterness he describes in detail the constant economic problems which distorted everyday life, in his close-knit family (which worried - as the title indicates - incessantly about the young Heinrich's prospects), and he brilliantly conveys the air of doom which hung over this great Catholic city whose historic physiognomy was in turn so crudely disguised by the ubiquitous swastika flag.

This succinct memoir not only reveals the vital roots of Heinrich Böll's unique mixture of radical protest and moral conservatism but succeeds in "whetting" the appetite for more.

Seraglios and imbroglios

By P. S. Lewis

R. J. KNECHT:
Francis I
480pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25.
0 521 24344 0

Apart from some early portraits of the infant Caesar – this was how his mother Louise of Savoy thought of him, and she seems almost to have willed into extinction those who stood between him and a perhaps unlikely throne – we have, essentially, two portrait-types of Francis I, derived from the 1520s and the 1540s. Francis in his youth was thought the handsomest man at Court. Standards of male beauty may well have changed: in his twenties he appears a young cheerful lecher, in his forties an ageing and disillusioned one. No one can deny him his portable haem (taken into the woods with him when he went hunting), but he had his virtues as well. In the excellent epilogue to this book, R. J. Knecht summarizes Francis: "He had many faults and made many mistakes. He was wilful, impetuous, grasping, profligate, licentious and fickle; but he had qualities: intelligence, eloquence, physical bravery and, by the standards of his age, humanity."

Seraglios and imbroglios (to echo Laurence Durrell), the seraglio we may now forget about (if Francis never did), but the imbroglios? Most spectacular those abroad: the wars in Italy, the wars against the Emperor Charles V and Henry VIII of England, punctuated by unstable truces and treaties. In his preface Knecht implicitly defends *l'événementiel* history, the chronological narration of what happened, battles and treaties and all; indeed, a considerable part of his book is taken up with narrative, and Knecht's narrative is well done: battles – Marignano (which Francis won, becoming a second Caesar) and Pavia (which Francis lost, and ended up a captive in Madrid) – are particularly vivid here. Those to whom *l'événementiel* history may not be particularly to the taste cannot but applaud Knecht's breadth of knowledge, skill and endurance.

A form of parallelism in the arts, or bad luck, led to Jean Jacquart's *Francis I's* appearing at the beginning of last year. Knecht regards it as "an excellent synthesis" and he is glad to see that he and Jacquart agree on most matters of substance. As one would expect from the author, his treatment of the economic and social background is particularly strong. He is less informative on the life of the king, the political history of the last ten years of the reign, artistic patronage and overseas expansion. This is fair enough; and we should probably leave comparison of the two books there. But one general point may be made. One of the medievalist approaches of the earlier sixteenth century tends to approach it with one perspective, a "modernist" approaching the fifteenth century with another. And when a later medievalist with an aversion to "isms" factors, and the simplification of complex situations comes upon some modern attitudes he wonders, rather. It was Bruce McFarlane, I think, who produced the gulp was: if only the middle ages weren't more modern. It might be argued that the whole concept of "modernism" reeks of anachronism: after all, the sixteenth century could not have known that they were propounding of the Ancien Régime *fortis*. It is arguable that the whole sweep from the fifteenth century on into the sixteenth should be seen with one perspective, unbroken, unblemished.

For instance, how far were the foreign-political imbroglios of Francis I's reign the continuation of those even centuries earlier? How far was Francis I's "foreign policy" dominated, as it were, by the past? In Italy, for instance, Charles VIII had dreamed, among other things more bizarre, of his Angevin inheritance in Naples, Louis XII and Francis I of

their Orleans inheritance in Milan, the "principal aim of Francis' foreign policy since his accession": how old an Orleans obsession! On the eastern front, Burgundy, the emperor Charles V intent on the recovery of his grandmother's inheritance arguably usurped by Louis XI; but that this was an usurpation was based upon the peculiarity of the apauvre grant to her great-great-grandfather in 1363. In the north, the English with their at least toe-hold around Calais; but then, nobody imagined that the Hundred Years' War had ended, in this kind of perspective it is hardly helpful to call the anachronism a "feudal nation-state". After all, a Bourbon did succeed to the throne in 1589; and to work out his claim to it one had to go back to a son of St Louis.

"Nation state": one questionable label. "Royal authority" is another. It might be more helpful to demonstrate how the nation state, or royal authority, did not exist. But these point should perhaps be made on this question of continuity. Knecht's Bologn of 1516 are eminently sensible; but one wonders whether, in the underground Mafia-world of the church, it changed all that much in what really happened, any more than Bourges of 1438, or the concordat of 1472, however much they may have been appealed to as surface symbols. The reality, and the continuity, was there. And "absolutism", I have mentioned, as "royal authority", a subject too large to go into here. But one might note, perhaps, that not only the *président* Guillard in the Parlement of Paris in 1527 echoed St Gregory – the true prince does not do all that he can do, only

that which is just: so did Jean Juvenal des Ursins in 1452.

The question of continuity does not of course beg that of change if the financial administration, for instance, Francis was perpetually short of money: his wars were expensive. So, for Knecht, "the king's" obsession with war, reprehensible as it is, was not a moral grounds, stimulated constitutional change. One might prefer the word "administrative", but certainly financial administration became much more streamlined in Francis's reign. Venality – the sale of offices – had existed for centuries, if not centuries; but in the sixteenth century it became public, and the same way – the "new" taxes of Francis's reign – on the towns, for instance – were, if only developments of anterior practices, at least developments. But they were not revolutions.

Was anything revolutionary in this half-century? Francis, as even the publisher's catalogue proclaims, "presided over the Renaissance, Reformation in France". This is a bit like presiding over the dissolution of the Empire: you try to do what you can, but the process is pretty unstoppable. To take the Reformation first. Knecht shows again here, as he has long shown, his ability to understand Francis I on religion. The affair of the *licenciés* of May 1568: the same world in which everyone was trying to control reform, producing a counter-reaction which gave, arguably at least, a matrix for the politics of the rest of the century and beyond. Francis's hand was forced; he had never tolerated heresy; he only intervened from time to time to protect certain scholars and preachers connected with the court. For years

the Parlement and the Sorbonne had been obstructed by the king in their efforts to silence the voice of reform. Now there could be no argument as to the seriousness of the Protestant challenge. The Reformation, unfortunately, became a serious thing. But if the old church had been a Mafia world, so, surely, was the new: why, dully *went* to become a Protestant? At this level the "Reformation" became a complex matter too.

Perhaps less complex, if more arcane – in the sense that its mysteries were confined to the wealthy – is the Renaissance in France. Knecht's chapter on Francis I as "patron of the arts and father of letters" provides almost the centrepiece of his book. This is the spectacular Francis, Loire and Ile-de-France – "tous les guides vous le disent", the Michelin guide tells us helpfully, "se doivent de visiter Fontainebleau", the salons along the Loire: the exuberance of an idiom brought back from the Italian was taken up by the king and the court. But there were also the arts and letters; and in all this the personal taste and intervention of the king himself probably cannot be denied.

"The intervention of the king himself", this produces, perhaps, another question: what is due to the personal intervention of the king? Take Berking's question: what does a king think about all day? The answer: apart from hunting and mistresses (Francis I spent enough time on them), battles and treaties (he thought enough about them, too). But how far, in more ordinary matters, was he activated by pressure from below? How many of the thirty-two thousand *actes de François I* that survive issued "from the personal initiative, instance and proper

judgement of the king, without favour to another"? The phrase, and the practices of which it is so revealing, are of Louis XI's reign; but one cannot think that they were much different in that of his first cousin's. Decisions taken by his councillors, Knecht tells us, were reported even to a moribund Francis I; so it was thought that they should be to Louis XI's father. There is not much evidence here of initiative, or even of control.

Complexity in the workings of the church, complexities in the process of "royal decision-making", let alone complexities in urban politics – and nobles themselves in maintaining their political pyramids and in dealing with the centre, and for the king – and here personally – in dealing with his greater magnates. How far was Francis I inept in handling Bourbon, feudal fossil though he may have been? The whole question in here, its outlines are becoming clearer for the reign of Louis XI; one suspects they are the same outlines for the first half of the sixteenth century; and their continuity provides a stronger argument even than that one might put forward for "surface" continuity. For things on the surface may change; whether those changes can influence the depths is another matter.

Complexity and continuity, therefore, are the quibbles one might bring against Knecht's achievement. For an undoubted achievement is what this book is, in the breadth and comprehensibility of its narrative history, in the sensitivity of its pieces on humanism, religion and the arts particularly; but valuable throughout. One feels Francis I, playing idly with the jasper salamander on the chain around his neck, would have enjoyed a conversation with Mr Knecht.

POETRY

Carrying the Metaphysical cross

By Anne Stevenson

R. S. THOMAS:
Between Here and Now
100pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 313 32186 3

J. P. WARD:
To Get Clear
50pp. Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press. £2.95.
0 907476 04 X

RICHARD POOLE:
Words Before Midnight
60pp. Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press. £2.95.
0 907476 03 1

Admirers of the so-called "New Metaphysicals" based in or around London might do well to investigate what is going on at present in Wales. Contemporary Anglo-Welsh poets are only passingly acknowledged by their English brethren; and this is a pity, for it is in Wales, if anywhere, that a true Metaphysical tradition still persists. By Metaphysical I mean a style in which manifestations of spiritual ideas are presented with startling or witty scientific precision – as when Donne likens his lovers to "twin compasses", or Herbert sees his preacher as a "brittle crazy glass". In Wales today two poets, R. S. Thomas and Roland Mathias, seem genuinely to have carried this cross of the scientific and spiritual into the late twentieth century, although many younger poets in Wales have inherited the seriousness of this tradition.

Of living Welsh poets R. S. Thomas is undoubtedly the best known

outside Wales; his reputation as a hard-bitten, stoic seeker of the Way should not suffer by the publication of his new collection, *Between Here and Now*. Some readers may be surprised, however, on opening this book, to find themselves on holiday from those dour, familiar soils and souls of North Wales and off to Paris on a conducted tour of the Impressionist paintings of the Louvre. Most teachers of art make a point of scolding us when we look for the story behind (or within) the pictures. We should be paying attention instead to the planes of light or the modulations of space. So it comes as a secret relief to find in the normally stern, uncompromising Thomas a relish for gossip.

Thirty-three paintings (reproduced, unfortunately, in black and white, so that they are more like reminders of the originals than representations) provide, as it were, the fixed foot of Thomas's astute imagination engagingly circles. The poet's remarks are not so much poems as comments disciplined into lines, but they are the comments of a compassionate, clever man in whose company the masterpieces of Manet, Monet, Bazille, Degas, Cézanne, Renoir and others come alive with a peculiar vibrancy, as if one art were reflecting the brilliance of another.

Thomas sometimes permits himself a sly comment on the nature of art itself, as when he marks of Degas's "Women Ironing"; his is art over-coming permanently the temptation to answer a yawn with a yawn. Again, in Van Gogh's "Portrait of Dr Gachet", he sees the quinine-eyed doctor "becoming patient himself of art's diagnosis". But perhaps the knife-edge of Thomas's wit is keenest when it indulges in social commentary. Bazille's

"Family Reunion" becomes an analysis of the pampered class it depicts:

Sex? They wanted it. Children? Why not? And clothes, clothes: how they oiled their background. Their looks challenge us to find where they failed.

Well-dressed, well-fed; their servants are out of sight, snatching a moment to beg off offspring who are to overturn all this.

Although it is delightful to find Thomas in such a pleasant, bantering mood, the section of "Other Poems" which concludes the book shows us that the vacation was a brief one. Continuing with the intense, often anguished meditations we have come to expect since *H'm* and *Laboratories of the Spirit*, several of these late poems are among Thomas's triumphs. Concerned as he is with "the silence of God" in our dark world, as with the "possessiveness of language" and the "electricity that convulses us", Thomas has developed a tough, serious, almost nihilistic in which the bitterness of grace leaves room for tentative hope.

The rules Thomas employs for breaking his lines have to do less with form than with meaning. For instance, the final lines of "Threshold", which concludes the collection, leave an interrogation hanging over an abyss between stanzas:

What balance is needed at the edges of such an abyss. I am alone on the surface of a turning planet. What to do but, like Michelangelo's Adam, put my hand

into unknown space, hoping for the reciprocating touch.

Whatever the faults of Thomas's lachrymose style – so spare, sometimes, as to exclude music – all his poems possess that authority of tone which is the hallmark of a master. The wit of the first half of *Between Here and Now* is anchored in the grim honesty of the latter part – an honesty which is tempered, nevertheless, by professional polish, not a little self-pity and an air of conscious performance.

Like R. S. Thomas, J. P. Ward writes a good deal about himself. But the poems he has gathered into his new book, *To Get Clear*, are more easily going than Thomas's; they are also wordier, more generous, and though more uneven in quality, less self-conscious. At his best Ward has a way with narrative which carries a poem through from beginning to end in an irresistible sweep of language. The reader boards a poem as if he were getting on a bus; before he knows it he has arrived at a destination well past anything he expected. The title poem, for instance, begins in a "simple place of trees and water, and a house with willow-pattern plates . . ." but within fourteen lines the poet has fed the cat with the milk which has a "hard edge of matter", and suddenly we are in the middle of a metaphysical speculation about the nature of matter, life and finally of God: who, in the person of St Anselm, enters the poem as gracefully as the cat, making his point quietly and deftly.

As he said he had thought and thought, as though along a renewed lane, to thought's end, and that end is Thou, O Lord Our God. I said it seemed he had changed the gear of his language deftly, with his left hand turned upward; he said it was deliberate, and that the nettle's points at the roadside had brushed him as he got out of that car, and goaded him into that understanding.

Although most of the poems in *To Get Clear* are well wrought and intelligent, it is as a narrative moralist (if one can say such a thing) that J. P. Ward comes into his own; poems such as "On The Lake" – similar in theme to Elizabeth Bishop's "The Fish" – "London Welsh Bishop's 'The Fish'" – "London Welsh Bishop's 'The Fish'" – which has to do with accompanying a drunken rugby team on a train, and "Melancholia", which describes the pathos of sex in a striptease club, all hold one in an almost seamless web of language. In no other time but our own, perhaps, would a poet feel obliged to wrap up his moralizing in such delicate phrasology, or make such a backdoor affair of his faith. Ward, however, manages brilliantly, combining an uncompromising integrity with a contemporary flair for understatement. He can turn a trip to London on the M1 into the long, lonely, dark of the British people through history!

We ignorantly drove; our inevitable course, the scared, the scared, the scared, the scared, our moment, our revolution, our intellects awaking, passed and being the dark mindless, the blue sign of pleading.

To Get Clear is not a collection of religious poems, but a sense of the sacred permeates both the accurate, clever descriptions and the personal insights. One is left with an impression of having been told the truth cleanly and with warmth.

Richard Poole's second collection is called *Words Before Midnight*, but the poem which is central to it is "Three o'clock involuntary" in which the poet gives vent to the romantic terror of death. Where J. P. Ward philosophizes from the *terra firma* of his Christian faith, and where R. S. Thomas deliberately leads us to the edge of the abyss, demonstrating the terrible perils of disbelief, Richard Poole clings to the notion that death is both final and frightful; in poems which celebrate married love, his child, his home, the certainties and uncertainties of past and present, he manages also to convey his obsession with nothingness and the morbid self-concern into which this obsession has plunged him. There is no doubt that Poole is a skilful poet, and in those poems where he manages to avoid his darker self – as in the excellent long monologues of "Old women living together" – he is both compelling and compassionate. But what may turn out to be a phase of youthful *Rimbaudisme* has got the better of him in this book.

Towards the end, though, there is a charming poem about two little girls and Matthew Arnold, in which nostalgia for the past is tempered with just the right touches of the particular:

Gone the gardener's cottage in the grounds of Dingle Bank – where to the delight of his two daughters, the sea-spray dashed the window-panes.

Gone the little daughters. Gone their pinafores that were so beautifully sewed by Mr Arnold's sewing maid. Gone too the poet who in the lost long-ago gave the little girls pennies, and blessed them.

There are enough poems in this light but penetrating vein in *Words Before Midnight* to neutralize the effect of its murkier pages. Another poem which seems to come delightfully off the cuff but which is, in fact, very clever, is "Eastleach Turville, 1977", in which the poet sketches the ideal English hamlet, finishing with the punch-line "This is how England never and always was," Richard Poole is obviously a poet endowed with intelligence, sensitivity and humour. His next collection may pull him completely out of the Slough of Despond.

The latest issue of *Agenda* (Volume 19, No 4 – Volume 20, No 1, obtainable from 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE, 24) contains Peter Levi's poem "For Denis Bethell", two poems by C. H. Sisson, Ronald Duncan's "Testament", and six poems by Jeremy Hooker, with reviews of the work of each of those poets. There are verse translations by Humphrey Clucas from Horace, by Peter Dale after Aragon, by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France of Boris Pasternak, by Michael Hamburger of Goethe, and of Martial by both W. S. Miles and Peter Whigham, who also prints verses of Virgil and Catullus. Jean MacVean reviews the collected poems of Kathleen Raine, and Anne Beresford those of Sylvia Plath. Harold Monro's death fifty years ago is commemorated by a supplement reprinting Ezra Pound's essay on him and adding another by Jonathan Baker.

JAKOV LIND Travels to the Enu

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METHUEN

Raising the royal wind

By Roger Mettam

RICHARD BONNEY:
The King's Debits
Finance and Politics in France 1589-1661.
344pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50.
0 19 822563 6

The central government has been a neglected topic in recent histories of seventeenth-century France. Historians, following current fashions, have written at length about popular movements, social groups, institutions, categories of office-holders and provincial society, but the ministers in the immediate circle around the king have received little attention except when their feature in an account of short period of crisis. Richard Bonney now fills the vacuum with an excellent study of the personnel, policies and problems of successive royal ministries over a span of seventy-two years. The end-sources is the dominant theme of this book, just as it was in the minds of government, especially foreign and military strategy, were affected by the usually unsatisfactory state of the treasury, and Dr Bonney's clear and detailed narrative demonstrates the extent to which the various policies of the crown, at home and abroad, interlocked and even conflicted. Thus, for example, some of the hitherto elusive reasoning behind specific decisions in foreign policy is uncovered when the financial concerns of the moment are taken into account.

If the royal ministers encountered frequent opposition from Parisian and provincial society, they were also insecure at the court itself. Apart from the permanent threat of princely coups, the ministers had enemies among their own colleagues, whose ambitious rivals were quick to de-

own one of their number whose policies had foundered, or even to fabricate charges against him. Also loyal servants might be sacrificed if their dismissal would help to restore the popularity of the monarchy. Yet at times of extreme hardship the crown was prepared to sell these senior posts to men whose wealth compensated for their lack of administrative ability. Thus the dangerous aspect of venality might at times be very close to the centre of power. Factions also existed among the financiers, whom the government relied so heavily, with rival consortia developing links with one or other of the royal ministers.

Throughout the period 1589-1661, the direct and indirect taxes contributed only a portion, often less than a third, of the funds reaching the treasury. Moreover their yield increased very little at a time when royal expenditure was growing rapidly. The tax-base for these levies remained too narrow, the methods of collection continued to be woefully inefficient, and too many vested interest groups throughout the realm successfully resisted attempts to introduce new taxes or raise those already in existence. Ministers either never bothered to devise, or else quickly abandoned, any major reform of these areas of the fiscal system. The bulk of the crown's financial income had therefore to be met from *affaires extraordinaires* such as government bonds, the sale of new offices, forced borrowing from existing officials, direct borrowing from financiers, and delays in the payment of sums already owed by the treasury. In tapping these additional sources of money and in the farming of the indirect taxes, the financiers played a vital role, advancing sums to the crown long before the actual revenues could be collected.

These entrepreneurs were thus both a group which the government could not afford to alienate, and yet also the principal target for the

criticism voiced by the *parlements*, the estates-general and others who, reluctant to reform the wider network of the tax system in which they were themselves involved, clamoured for economies at the centre. Excessive royal expenses, secret payments and gifts, borrowing at bad terms – these were constant grievances of the *parlements*, and it was the ministers who received the blame. To placate these critics, the crown periodically set up *chambres de justice* to investigate charges of corruption and excessive profiteering, but those usually only fined, and not too heavily, so that their useful partnership with the government could continue. It is true that some financiers made huge fortunes, but many did not, and the government bankruptcy of 1648 hit them very hard indeed.

The crown therefore oscillated among the various partial remedies for its poverty. It would exploit and then placate the financiers, would curtail the salaries of officials and then restore them when they protested, would reduce the interest on state bonds and then retrace its steps to appease the investors, and would negotiate the terms of financial contracts when it dared to do so. No defaulting on its debts, but if he did so too drastically he would either not be able to borrow for a while or only at extortionate rates of interest. Yet at times when the crown was sufficiently solvent to honour its contractual obligations, there were plenty of people who were prepared to lend money to it, often disguising these activities by using intermediaries. In the end the state was undoubtedly more respectable than participants in the socially-degrading world of commerce and industry.

There are so many splendid points of interpretation in Bonney's narrative that it is impossible to note them all here. Although historians have accepted that the royal financial posi-

tion steadily declined from Henri IV to the Fronde, he now sets this process in a firm chronology in which various policies can be precisely dated and some ministers blamed more than others. He wisely warns against exaggerating the achievements of Sully and the popularity of Henri IV during the king's lifetime. In contrast the much reviled Regency of Marie de Médicis is shown to have had some able finance ministers. It was in the 1630s that everything went wrong, under the incompetent and corrupt Bullion, whose ministry saw a peak in the sale of offices and increases in taxation to the point that they simply could not be paid. Thus, against the background of a foreign policy which Bonney condemns as needlessly expensive, the subsequent ministry of Mazarin could neither increase nor reform the taxes. The royal courses open were heavier borrowing, defaulting on payments and ultimate bankruptcy.

After a full account of the civil wars and the crown's continuing poverty, Bonney concludes with a convincing rehabilitation of Fouquet. He was made a scapegoat when the crown defaulted on its debts again in 1661, partly because of ministerial jealousy and partly because Louis XIV was determined to show that no over-mighty subject could feel secure under his personal rule. Yet Fouquet had begun to reform the finances after the peace of 1659, and commanded some respect in the money-markets and in the *parlements*. At times he lent as much as 5,000,000 *livres* of his own money to the crown, having to borrow much of it himself from financiers.

Such were the precarious finances of ancient régime governments in France, and Dr Bonney's book the personal recent assertions that the personal rule of Louis XIV began with royal power at a very low level. After only thirteen years of relative peace, war would once more plunge the finances into chaos, and short-term remedies would again dominate ministerial planning.

Northern necessities

By Alan Bold

CHRISTINA FORBES MIDDLETON:
The Dance in the Village
and other poems
85pp. Aberdeen University Press.
£4.50.
0 08 028438 8

OLIVE FRASER:
The Pure Account
Poems, selected and introduced by Helena M. Shire
36pp. Aberdeen University Press.
£2.50.
0 08 02755 0

KEN MORRICE:
For All I Know
57pp. Aberdeen University Press.
£3.50.
0 08 02756 9

What Hugh MacDiarmid brought to Scottish poetry was an individual gift rather than a contribution to a tradition. His synthetic Scots, combining oral rhythms and dictionary-based diction, was an experiment. In fact Christopher Grieve adopted the pseudonym Hugh MacDiarmid in 1922, the year of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. Before "The Watergaw" (the first MacDiarmid lyric) post-Burnian Scots had been used almost exclusively for regional verse. Perhaps the finest of the regional writers was Charles Murray of Aberdeen, whose poems were so generally popular that extra editions of the *Aberdeen Press* and *Journal* had to be printed when they appeared in that paper. In a speech in Aberdeen in 1912, Murray said of his Scots poems: "That these things should be written in the vernacular was neither accidental nor intentional. It was simply inevitable. If I had been forced to or tried to write in English I certainly could have done nothing."

In 1925, MacDiarmid, by then underlining Scottish complacency with his polemic, said "Charles Murray has not only never written a line of poetry in his life, but he is constitutionally incapable of doing so." Despite such words of warning, Scotland soon returned to the suburbs, and post-MacDiarmid Scots poetry has been noted for its pre-

MacDiarmid acceptance of regionalism. Aberdeen University Press have recently made a point of promoting this regional bias. In 1979 they published, as a declaration of intent, *Hamewill: The Complete Poems of Charles Murray*. Now they publish three collections by modern Aberdeen poets. This is self-consciously regional verse; within that genre the three poets display personal mannerisms.

Christina Forbes Middleton is the most unashamedly regional of the three. In an introduction to her poems she says, with unconscious irony, "Frankly, I have never been particularly fond of poetry." I confess to having great admiration for Charles Murray. It certainly shows in her verse, which makes a virtue of the necessity of being Scottish. Aberdeen's current prosperity is founded on the twin presence of oil and Americans. Ms Middleton (who proclaims herself a "free-thinking woman of today") inevitably alludes to the American invasion in "Yanks – You're Welcome!" The anecdotal wee-jokiness of the poem sums Ms Middleton's manner. A "Yanks couple" are touring the countryside outside Aberdeen:

They paired a cairn piled up wit' manure
The stink about knocked them flat
Hiram remarked: "Well, I'll be durned –
"Just get a load of that!"

Elsewhere Ms Middleton shows the same flatfooted humour. In "Burns' Flight of Fantasy" she imagines the ventriloquist on Michael Parkinson's television programme and offers quatrains supposedly written by Burns "in his own inimitable way". Alas, what follows is self-satisfied doggerel.

The poetry of Olive Fraser and Ken Morrice allies the regional muse to psychotherapeutic intensity. For almost a century, since Stevenson diagnosed the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome in 1886, Scotland has been dually aware of chaos and divinity. Burns called this the Antithetical Mind. Gregory Smith called it the "Caledonian Antithesis" and R. D. Laing (who learned his medicine in Glasgow) drew attention to the Divided Self. Both Fraser and Morrice have responded to Laing's insights into the treatment of mental problems. Olive Fraser (1904-77)

was an outstanding undergraduate who found postgraduate life too much of an anticlimax. In 1956 she broke down under the pressure of her terrible sense of inadequacy and received hospital treatment as a schizophrenic. In 1963 she settled in Aberdeen close to the mental hospital she attended and, as Helena Middleton Shire says in her introduction, "was now grossly overweight, disfigured by hypothyroidism, unable because of medication to endure the sunlight of a summer's day and totally unable to cope with everyday living." As she recovered she wrote poems mapping out the areas explored in her journey through schizophrenia. The poems are solipsistic, and the sense is stretched taut over a traditional pattern of stanza and rhyme:

There is no light so deep as this
Inevitable mind's abyss,
Where I now dwell with loss alone.
Feather and wing and breathing bone
And blood's creature come not here,
But the long dead, the anguished fear
Of never breaking from this hold,
Encapsuled, rapt, and era old.

Ken Morrice's "earring role and his experience as a psychiatrist" are cited in Cuthbert Graham's introduction to his book. Morrice celebrates diversity by using two poetic voices: Scots and English. His Scots poems are relatively cosy and complacent; even a memorial poem on MacDiarmid ("A Man From Crowdiegowie") suffers from the sentimental connotations of regional Scots: "You were aye a great bither; and drawn / And a bonny fether." Morrice refers to the Aberdeen speech as the "slow tongue / of canny folk" ("Culture"). He is actually more at home in the clinical poems, using brittle imagery, an abrupt tone, and a precise diction. "Sex Offender" describes the subject thus: "His skull spalls, cracking egg-shell thin / spilling brains like yolk." Yet the poems do more than record data; they reach out for conclusions. In the Auden-esque "Clinical Demonstration" a patient claims an age of two thousand years:

Before the class he sat beside his
schizophrenic, chronic, paranoid.
International Classification 295.3;
sad, mad, immersed, forgotten
crucified by ignorance and fear –
maybe, in truth, two thousand years.
At that level the region at least tries
to contain the cosmos.

Codes and cases

By Lucy Mair

JOHN L. COMAROFF and SIMON ROBERTS:
Rules and Processes
The Cultural Logic of Dispute in an African Context
293pp. Chicago University Press.
£19.25.
0 266 11424 4

In 1969-70 John L. Comaroff and Simon Roberts were working among sections of the scattered Tswana people. Roberts, as adviser to the Botswana government on customary law, found his material in court records and the discussion of cases with those who remembered them; he concentrated on the Kgatla. Comaroff made a general anthropological study with a particular interest in politics; his field of inquiry was the area popularly known as Barolong and its people, the Tshidi. In the period of what we used to call the transfer of power, preparation for independence involved crash courses in the organization of institutions held to be appropriate for democratic states. Legal advisers recorded codes in systematic form, and offered instruction in techniques likely to secure clear and fair decisions. This was nothing new. Most colonial rulers have believed that they had brought to their subjects a higher conception of justice than they knew before. In the 1930s, when some awareness of the element of compromise in African dispute settlement began to appear, a sympathetic District Commissioner argued in the journal *Africa* that Africans would be content with "a little injustice" for the sake of a decision reached in their own way. A legal stickler retorted wistfully, "It is always a

little injustice." Both knew with complete confidence what justice was. At a time when expatriate officials had to supervise the work of "customary courts" and sometimes hear appeals from them, a cut-and-dried code was a considerable improvement on the darkness of total ignorance, particularly if it was drawn up by an anthropologist familiar with the institutions to which it applied. I. Schapera's *Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, produced at the request of the Bechuanaland government, was the first and best compendium of this kind, and it is the starting-point for Comaroff and Roberts.

But it does not satisfy them, and they are still less satisfied with much of the work that has appeared since with the label of a new study, "legal anthropology". They maintain that it is not possible to segregate from the fabric of Tswana social life, or from that of any other so-called "primitive community", the aspects that Malinowski called "codes, courts and constables", which form the subject-matter of Anglo-American law books. Malinowski was criticized for failing to offer a definition of law that marked off this area, but for Comaroff and Roberts it is his "legal anthropologists". They trace the Tswana formalistic attitude back to Radcliffe-Brown, and argue that for a right understanding of the process of dispute settlement it must be combined with Malinowski's "transactional" one (a term not current in Malinowski's lifetime).

Indeed the Tswana recognize the existence of norms which should be obeyed and can be invoked, and this individual Tswana. But when it comes to making a case, the situation is not so clear. In a society where rights and obligations are still largely a matter of

legitimate descent, the rules governing marriage and inheritance are crucial. But what are they? Among the many formalities held to go towards the conclusion of a marriage, none is indispensable, and ultimately every thing turns on the fact of a relationship stable enough to be recognized as one. There are clear rules for the transmission of property on death, but other rules permit devolution much earlier, so that in practice most men's property has been divided long before they die. When a claim is disputed, the past is re-edited. There never was a marriage. A chief cannot be deposed; but this man was never really a chief, only a stand-in.

Malinowski's theories have generally been associated more with those to the fulfillment of obligations than with the kind of breakdown that calls for third-party intervention; this was not institutionalized in Trobriand society. It was left for later ethnographers, among whom Philip Gulliver was a pioneer, to trace the processes through which disputants pursue their aims, by choosing the venue of discussion, by placing potential supporters under obligation, by imposing their own interpretation on the issue to be decided. In Tswana courts the complainant speaks first, and couches his story in terms which imply consensus on some norm that he leaves implicit. These are the "processes" by which the "rules" are manipulated, and, over time, are gradually changed. Rules are meaningless outside the context of processes, processes enable the necessary manipulation of rules.

A rich field of inquiry is opened for the student, particularly one who has been accustomed to think in terms of formal law. But I would greatly like to know what advice Simon Roberts gave to the Botswana government.

The War of the Guns

By Anthony Atmore

SANDRA BURMAN:
Chieftdom Politics and Allen Law
Basutoland under Cape Rule, 1871-1884
250pp. Macmillan, in association with St Antony's College, Oxford.
£20.
0 333 26442 8

In *Chieftdom Politics and Allen Law* Sandra Burman recounts the history of what must be a unique experience of colonial rule for any of the peoples of nineteenth-century Africa. During the 1850s and 1860s the Basotho, under the benign rule of Mosheshoe (Moshesh), became embroiled in a series of vicious minor wars with the neighbouring Boer (Afrikaner) farmers on the high veld spreading to the Orange and the Cape. The British governor at the Cape annexed Lesotho as a British protectorate in 1868, to prevent the uprisings beyond the Orange River spreading to other parts of South Africa. After a period of uncertainty, the British in 1871 persuaded the authorities in the Cape Colony, which was about to achieve responsible government, to take over Basutoland.

Basutoland was not incorporated into Cape Colony, being ruled as a kind of colony. But although the full apparatus of Cape law was not introduced (this would have included granting the qualified franchise of the Cape), the policy of the new administration was to undermine the authority of the Sotho chiefs by operating an alternative system of jurisdiction. The white magistrates persuaded people to bring cases to their courts rather than to those of the chiefs. In the magistrates' courts rules were enforced which altered considerably the basic assumptions of Sotho law and social behaviour.

Sandra Burman who is a lawyer as well as a historian, analyses the interplay between the two systems of law, and examines the conflict which increasingly grew up between them. At first, the Cape administrators appeared to have established a viable colonial rule. Many Sotho, who were becoming quite prosperous by their participation in the boom of the Kimberley diamond fields, welcomed the chiefs. But by the late 1870s, however, the economic boom had turned to depression. At the same time the Cape authorities stepped up their demands on the Sotho. In the resulting stress, people turned once more to the protection of the chiefs.

With few exceptions, the chiefs were all members of the house of Mosheshoe; his brothers, his sons and their sons. The tentacles of the ruling dynasty spread throughout the country. The relationship of the chiefs to the white magistrates was highly ambiguous. The stated policy of the administration was to break their power, but colonial rule could not operate without the tacit acquiescence of the chiefs. This led above all to Letsie, the eldest son of Mosheshoe (who had died in 1870, on the eve of Cape rule). The magistrates bolstered his position as paramount chief, and Letsie, in his turn, used the magistrates to enhance his reputation and power.

Inherent conflict came to a head in 1879 when Moorosi, a chief in the south of Basutoland, who was not a member of the house of Mosheshoe, defied the authority of the magistrates, to the point of open rebellion. Letsie and his followers sided, hesitantly, with the Cape officials, and a Sotho contingent aided the Cape forces in their campaign against Moorosi. After the defeat and death of the old chief, the colonial government introduced stern measures against the Sotho. But tax was to be increased (at a time of depression), the lands of Moorosi were to be appropriated for white settlement, and the Sotho were to be deprived of their guns. Most men possessed a gun, many of which had been obtained as a result of their labour on the diamond fields or on Cape railway construction.

Disarmament was the final straw. During seven months in 1880 and 1881 Sotho forces, led by Letsie's son Lerotoli and his brother Masopha, kept the Cape troops at bay. The outcome of the Gun War was indecisive. The Cape, however, not only failed to win the war but also to maintain the peace, mainly because of the intransigence of Masopha. By 1884 the Cape had had enough of Basutoland, and the British, with no great enthusiasm, took over responsibility for the protectorate. Under British rule, the power of the house of Mosheshoe was greatly enhanced. But if the country had remained under the Cape government, Lesotho would have been one of the Bantustans of South Africa. Thanks to their own efforts and in particular the obduracy of Masopha, Lesotho is now an independent kingdom. Sandra Burman's account of this fateful history is an admirable work. It is thorough, researched, well argued, and written in a matter-of-fact style. She has also assembled some splendid illustrations which help to make the characters in her story come alive across the century that has elapsed since the War of the Guns.

Talking of the past

By Robin Law

PAUL IRWIN:
Liptako Speaks
History from Oral Tradition
221pp. Princeton University Press.
£11.65.
0 691 05309 X

Given the dearth of written sources available for the reconstruction of African history, for most near and in most periods prior to the establishment of European colonial rule around the end of the nineteenth century, historians of Africa have always, since the beginnings of serious academic interest in the subject during the 1930s, had to make considerable use of oral traditions. Given the doubt of much of the historical profession about the reliability of such traditional sources, they have also had to reflect upon the methodological problems involved in their use. In the early days, the tendency was to insist upon the essential historicity of oral traditions, which it was believed could be handled with the help of much the same methods of source criticism as were applied to written documents; and Jan Vansina's classic book, *Oral Tradition*, first published in French in 1961, served as a moral charter for Africa in their use of traditional material.

But in the 1970s there came a wave of scepticism, with anthropologists arguing that ostensibly historical traditions had to be understood as symbolic statements of cosmological categories, rather than as accounts of actual events, and with some historians (notably David Henige, in his *The Chronology of Oral Tradition*, published in 1974) demonstrating how traditions can change drastically in both form and content under the impact of changing political and cultural conditions. Of late, it seems that oral traditions are making something of a comeback, as a new and wiser generation of histo-

rians (represented, for example, in the recently published collection of papers edited by Joseph Miller, *The African Past Speaks*), while conceding much of the case of the sceptics, seek to show that nevertheless oral traditions, when properly handled, can form a usable historical source. Paul Irwin belongs to this newer group, less sanguine but not altogether despairing about the historical value of traditional evidence.

His book derives from research undertaken for a PhD dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, completed in 1973, on the history of Liptako, a state in what is nowadays the Republic of Upper Volta which was founded by a revolution, inspired by Islamic ideals and associated with the Fulbe ethnic group, around 1810. Unlike the thesis, the book does not attempt to trace the history of Liptako, but rather to examine the nature of the historical traditions current in the area and to assess their reliability and value as sources. The emphasis is overwhelmingly on the limitations of the traditions, despite the author's own attempts to mitigate this negativity by insisting that the traditions could tell us something about the past. The traditions are shown to be highly selective in what they record, being both chronologically shallow (with little remembrance about the period before the revolution which founded the state in the early nineteenth century) and concentrated upon the ruling elite of Fulbe males (with little recorded of slaves, women or other subordinate elements in society).

Different traditions relating to the same events are often contradictory in detail, the divergences being often readily explicable in terms of the prejudices and interests of those who tell the stories; in some cases reliable traditions can be distinguished from unreliable ones by comparison with contemporary written documents bearing upon the history of the area; but since this written documentation is very limited for the nineteenth century (and, for the twentieth century, the author is obliged to admit that in many

instances we simply cannot be sure what happened.

It is not easy to see in all this the vindication of the use of oral tradition, even as a supplement to conventional written sources. Indeed, it is the weaknesses of traditions which are exposed; history - as established from conventional sources - is in-voked to make sense of the traditions, rather than traditions serving for the reconstruction of history. Irwin has written a very entertaining book, which throws a great deal of light on Liptako and perceptions, but it is a book which those who, like this reviewer, wish to use traditions as historical sources, will surely find more than a little disheartening.

Foundation stones

By G. I. Jones

M. ANGULU ONWUEJOGWU:
An Igbo Civilization
Nri Kingdom and Hegemony.
204pp. Ethnographica, 19 Westbourne Road, London N17. £22.
0 905 788 08 7

The archaeological "discoveries" at Igbo-Ukwu form an important landmark in the prehistory of south-eastern Nigeria, but they have created more problems than they have solved. The archaeology of the site was described in comprehensive detail by Thurston Shaw in his monumental *Igbo-Ukwu: an account of the archaeological discoveries in Eastern Nigeria 1970*, which made it clear that there must have been some wealthy political or ritual authority in the area in the period AD 700-1020, associated with it, and that the fact that the hoards reassembled the fact of the Ozo: this association of the Northern Igbo.

When this part of Nigeria came under British colonial administration it was confirmed that there were to be kingdoms or large-scale political organizations in control of the eastern Nigerian hinterland; there were in certain communities whose itinerant traders had achieved a dominant position in the trade of certain regions. These were the east and the Umu Nri tribe in the north. Later it was established that the oral traditions of many of the Northern Igbo communities referred to founders who came from the senior town of Aguku Nri and that the Umu Nri tribe had a founder who came from Igala, married Igbo wives and settled first at Aguleri and finally at Aguku Nri.

Dr. Angulu Onwuejogwu has attempted in *An Igbo Civilization* to bring all this together, to link Umu Nri with the Igbo-Ukwu excavations and to reconstruct the history of the present day. He relies on "generalization and mainly on oral tradition for his facts. The trouble with such tradition however is that it tends to be some modified to suit the changing

interests and objectives of the narrators. Thus the account of the position and political powers of the traditional Eze Nri given to Dr Onwuejogwu by his 1974 informants differs markedly from what they told him in 1955, when, as Commissioner appointed by the Government of Eastern Region to inquire into the "Position, Status and Influence of Chiefs and Natural Rulers", I visited Aguku Nri.

However, this is an interesting and courageous first attempt at historical reconstruction of the Umu Nri people and their history, which brings together most of the known facts and conjectures about them. This book should stimulate Eastern Nigerian historians into greater activity in the elucidation of their prehistoric past.

Hubert Bucher, in *Spirits and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology* (231pp. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, £8.75, 0 19 570176 3), describes the beliefs of the Shona in Zimbabwe, about chiefs and territorial, ancestral and other spirits; the powers ascribed to witches and divination; and the doctrine and functioning of the "Churches of the Spirit".

BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS

Taking root on the stage

By Nicholas de Jongh

CLAIRE BLOOM:
Lifelight and After
The Education of an Actress
187pp with 40 black-and-white illustrations. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£8.95.
0 297 78051 4
DONALD SINDEN:
A Touch of the Memoirs
260pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
£7.95.
0 340 26235 4

In 1963 the actress Fenella Fielding created a piece of theatre called *So much to remember*. It was inspired by the complacencies and unselfconscious egotism of Ellen Terry's autobiographical writing. Miss Fielding portrayed a *grande dame* who believed her life to have been so significant and her personality so mesmerizing that she had exerted an influence upon the course of world history itself. I recall Miss Fielding's satire because it poured affectionate but telling scorn upon the fact that many actors have difficulty in finding or showing their true selves. Stage autobiographies tend to be camouflage exercises, which maintain or embellish stage personae. As a result few of them allow the actor to emerge fully as a person rather than a performer, or illuminate the complex life of the theatre and the procedures involved in the communal but private business of rehearsal and acting. The two latest in this genre are opposing examples: while Claire Bloom is serious, searching and analytical, Donald Sinden is superficial, anecdotal and bitchy. The first reveals the second evades.

The theme of Claire Bloom's book is apparently suggested by its subtitle, "The Education of an Actress", though in the end she inverts the sense of that phrase and admits that

acting became her means of self-education. The book's main section attempts to rediscover her life as a child, to relate that person to the actress she became and to describe the joys and growing pains which brought her there. Her origins were Russian and Jewish, the family surname being taken from a passport which her grandfather stole in Germany. While her mother's family lived a prosperous middle-class life in London, her father pursued a mysterious business career with fluctuating success; his frequent absences together with the outbreak of the Second World War, made for an uncertain childhood. The family led a rootless, nomadic existence until one hot, happy autumn morning in a seaside tea-room on the cliffs of Cornwall Claire Bloom heard the wireless music interrupted by Neville Chamberlain speaking from 10 Downing Street. Her recollection of this time, and of her entire early life matches her acting style, being sharp, cool and vivid. Arriving as war refugees in Milford the family were greeted by church-bells:

It was 1940 and France had already fallen. Throughout the war the bells were only to ring to signal an invasion. My mother went silently upstairs and put on her fur-coat. We all sat together in the living room. My parents had no illusions about what would befall a Jewish family when the Germans came, even though we did not yet know the full facts of what was happening in Europe.

Yet the war years, spent precariously in America and England, were to see the making of Claire Bloom as child actress and adolescent star. She came naturally, with excited confidence, to acting. "It was a feeling of rightness, akin to what I had experienced when I first discovered reading." By the age of seventeen she was playing Ophelia to two Hamlets at Stratford, with Scofield and Robert Helpmann alternating

the role, and falling in love alternately with each of the Princes. Until then her sexual imagination had been cluttered with romantic-sinister archetypes such as Heathcliff, Rochester, Maxim de Winter and Byron rather than with living people. With actor's luck, the commodity which Gielgud believes to be essential to every performer's career, she came, while the play was under rehearsal, across a mentally disturbed woman stammering incoherently in a local shop. That glimpse inspired her playing of Ophelia, and she became a Stratford star.

But Claire Bloom is not greatly concerned with her testing, tremendous debut years. It is the association with Charlie Chaplin in *Lifelight* that marks the book's extended climactic point and also signals Claire Bloom's emergence. She sees Chaplin rapturously, though not without a sharp awareness of the old man's fallibilities, observing that Buster Keaton's one-scene appearance was swiftly reduced in the cutting room since his performance was too "indecisive" for the director. But here at last was a father-figure to replace her own shadowy absent father. And it was the lure of acquiring Chaplin as a father-in-law more than that of gaining his son as a husband which precipitated her small "crush" on Sidney Chaplin.

After this, the book abandons narrative for a series of fragmentary essays and reflections which well explain why Claire Bloom's career seemed to lose its sense of purpose after the Old Vic seasons. She accuses herself of lacking "spontaneity", of exchanging an intuitive process for a cerebral form of acting. "Cold, frigid and remote", she recalls the critics saying of her and accepts the judgment. She is also contemptuous of the Shakespeare productions in which she appeared, condemning them as "pretty", "decorative" and "superficial", unconcerned about the "true relationship" between people. Even Tyrone Guthrie, for whom she

worked, is accused, wrongly, of founding a school of directors concerned with "theatrical effects, no investigation of the character or analysis of the play".

In making these criticisms Claire Bloom makes a fundamental mistake and provides a useful reminder. "The true relationship" between people does not constitute the main business of a Shakespearean director, and to make it the focus of endeavour is a narrowing thing: in the 1930s Shakespearean commentators, led by Wilson Knight, challenged the methods of his obsession with character-study and solely subjective response to the text. They showed that a Shakespeare production should be larger and deeper than the sum of the interaction between its characters. But this new criticism had no impact upon two generations of anti-intellectual Shakespeare directors - Guthrie was a magnificent if wayward exception. Claire Bloom emerged towards the close of this dispiriting phase of Shakespeare production and appreciated its deficiencies, even if she demanded the wrong solution.

"There's a side of me", she says, "that isn't very well-balanced, that's nervous and neurotic, and will go from one disaster to the next." These vivid, engrossing reminiscences (in which some American English and factual mistakes are notable - T. S. Eliot misquoted, Michael Redgrave to the wrong school) make one hope that having laid her family and personal ghosts Claire Bloom will now be able to exploit rather than conceal these aspects of herself on stage.

In contrast, there seems no justification for Donald Sinden's book of "memoirs". I use quotation marks in a fashion analogous to his use of them when referring disparagingly to homosexual love, to distinguish between the authentic and a mockery of the real thing, interspersed with a

confection of old, borrowed or baffling jokes and anecdotes in a diffuse, trivializing account of Sinden's passage through the worlds of cinema and theatre: he reveals himself as a sort of sub-star of films, a supporting theatre player, a visitor to an old Lord Alfred Douglas, and concludes when his Rank film contract was not renewed in 1960. Only the Sussex countryside and the craft of joining, to which he was apprenticed after an asthmatic, academically dull childhood, seem to inspire him to passionate feeling. And he is studiously coy and reticent about all matters personal. Students of adolescent confession will however be interested to read that from the age of fifteen to seventeen he regularly made love to a thirty-two-year-old lady of the village and cuckolded her peripatetic husband. Great female stars subsequently seem to have gravitated towards him with bewildering frequency, though only for a little light relief of the conversational kind. Marilyn Monroe, whom Sinden reviles for her interest in Method Acting, was forever giggling in his dressing-room: "One of the silliest women I have ever met", he comments charitably. A sulky Ava Gardner pining for foreign parts for Frank Sinatra is soon knocked into sense by a boisterous Sinden, who, frugally sensitive to other people's feelings, does not shrink at close description of the actress's pathetic behaviour. Edith Evans, whose famous dispute over Sybil Thorneycroft in *The Waters of the Moon* he quite misrepresents, is forever begging him into the dressing room "to make me laugh". Thorneycroft herself calls him her "Romeo" and is always agog in the front stalls to watch him. Having pleased so many famous ladies face to face Sinden is bent upon inducing laughter on the printed page. "Perhaps I shall record another touch of my memoirs in the future?" he concludes with an inciting question-mark. I suppose it will be a commercial success. But on this evidence, for Sinden to go any further than a touch would verge upon indecent assault.

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Post-revolutionary proletarians

By Alex Pravda

LEONARD SCHAPIRO and JOSEPH GODSON (Editors)
The Soviet Worker Illusions and Realities
Macmillan, £20 (paperback, £4.95).
0 333 28846 7

Every decade since the "proletarian revolutions" that brought them to power at least one of the East European Communist parties has been faced by working-class protest. In Poland workers have toppled three party leaderships twice nearly succeeded in transferring the entire political system. Soviet workers, by contrast, have remained quiescent. Apart from a handful of strikes every year and the very occasional riot the Soviet Union has experienced no overt working-class dissent since the 1920s.

Is this because workers in the Soviet Union are better off materially than their counterparts in Eastern Europe or because they are more effectively socialized and controlled? The Soviet Worker Illusions and Realities furnishes some of the evidence needed to address the Soviet side of the question. It is a stimulating if somewhat incongruous collection of academic analyses, journalistic observations and first-hand comments (from Soviet workers interviewed while travelling tourists in the West), covering topics ranging from planning and income to trade unions and education. Two areas of crucial importance receive scant attention, however. There is little on workers' political attitudes (apart from the odd comment by workers' tourists quoted in Max Rallie's generally useful compilation of their views) and nothing on participation in the Communist Party and other mass organizations. A more serious omission is that no attempt is made to define "working class" and "workers" or to locate them in Soviet society. (Murray Yanowitch understandably deals only with the educational aspect of workers' social position in his excellent analysis of educational inequalities.) As it stands the volume's strength lies in the essays dealing with the economic, welfare and educational aspects of the worker's lot.

In his introduction Leonard Schapiro asks to what extent the Soviet working class has benefited from a revolution carried out on its behalf over sixty years ago. Materially it appears, Soviet workers still fare badly, at least by Western standards. Despite large subsidies designed to keep down the cost of food, it takes a worker in Moscow twice as long as his London counterpart to earn a weekly family basket. To acquire a small car the worker in Moscow needs patience, contacts and three years' wages; in London he needs only eight months' pay. In Washington, D.C., these figures, and many more, are given in Keith Bush's interesting appendix on the purchasing power of workers' wages in Moscow, London, Paris, Munich and Budapest. East Berlin or even Warsaw in his tables the Moscow worker would still have appeared as poorly off, even if relatively less so. Strikers in Warsaw and Odessa in 1980 were protesting against living standards as yet only aspired to by most Soviet workers.

Most Soviet workers, however, do not assess their material well-being by Eastern standards, let alone by Western standards, even if some are aware of the disparities. Instead they tend to compare their present situation with that of earlier years and with the living standards enjoyed by other groups in Soviet society. The comparison with the past is a favourable one. Working-class living standards have improved steadily since the War, an important fact almost overlooked in this book.

More attention is devoted to the comparison with other social groups. Here the position of the workers is in general less favourable, for though they have risen in the "positional" economy since Stalin's death, they still fall predominantly into the lower half of the income pyramid, which Peter Wiles examines in the course of a characteristically flamboyant essay on income and wage policies. He presents some interesting comparative data suggesting that income distribution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe closely resembles that in Western societies. But, apart from a few brief comments, there is unfortunately no discussion of these comparisons nor of their implications for the Soviet worker. Instead Wiles concentrates on the evolution of wages and incomes policy under Stalin and Khrushchev - the Brezhnev era is hardly touched upon. Shifts in policy, Wiles contends, make sense in terms of the ideological predilections of successive party leaders rather than economic rationality.

A more convincing picture of incomes policy, as shaped by the interaction of egalitarianism and McArthur's valuable survey of welfare and social security. Welfare provision, although it has grown since the 1950s, still reflects a meritocratic bias in its allocation. Never conceived as a safety-net, despite the fact that large numbers of Soviet workers fall below the official poverty line, welfare benefits reinforce rather than modify the existing distribution of income. Thus it seems that the welfare and social security system may increase income inequalities to the detriment of the working class in general and the less able of its members in particular.

Why do Soviet workers put up with such relative deprivation and such poor living standards? Part of the answer lies in workers' social and material expectations, an area left

unexplored by these essays. They do, however, examine a variety of other factors, some economic and some organizational.

Low levels of pay are to some extent counterbalanced by the modest amount of effort needed to earn them. The old joke of the Polish worker, "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work", applies equally well to the Soviet Union. As David Dyker shows in a useful review of the economic system, the pace of work is generally slow, overmanning endemic and unemployment virtually non-existent. As well as enjoying full job security Soviet workers can, and frequently do, change jobs in search of higher pay and better conditions. Labour turnover is high, serving as a useful safety-valve for working-class dissatisfaction. Furthermore, those dissatisfied with pay can make something "on the side" by moonlighting and helping themselves to materials and goods from the factory. In his Pyodora Turovsky relates how workers in one Moscow watch factory even used carrier pigeons to smuggle products out of the plant.

Low demands, indulgent management, job security and the opportunities offered by the "second economy" thus go some way towards explaining workers' acceptance of their material position. Yet legal and organizational controls and constraints also play an important part. These are the factors emphasized by Turovsky, Schapiro and Godson.

Schapiro reminds us that since moves for trade-union autonomy were suppressed in the 1920s, Soviet unions have been strictly subordinated to the Communist Party and

government. Their "central task", to promote production, is officially defined as being inseparable from that of furthering working-class interests. Any attempt to question the congruity of this "dual" role, let alone to press for independent unions, meets with speedy repression. Thus the short-lived Association of Free Trade Unions was destroyed in 1978 and its successor, the Inter-Professional Association of Free Trade Unions, eked out a hazardous underground existence.

Meanwhile the official unions continue to subordinate their role of protecting workers to that of mobilizing labour. As Turovsky and Godson rightly point out, unions often fail to uphold workers' legal rights against abuse by management. But the picture given in these essays of unions as mere administrative agents of the Party, never promoting their members' welfare and surrendering happiness to the whims of management and the courts, is somewhat overdrawn. Notwithstanding the injustices that workers suffer it remains difficult for managers to dismiss them for other than political reasons. Union and party bodies in factories do frequent resolution of workers' grievances, and the courts often decide in workers' favour. The whole industrial relations system has greater flexibility and more informal give-and-take (if strikes are rare slowdowns are comparatively common) than the accounts by Godson and Turovsky allow. Such informal mechanisms may help to reduce industrial conflict, but they do not bridge the gap between trade-union theory and

practice; nor do they resolve the deep-seated problem of the gross misrepresentation of working-class interests.

Two trends in the position of Soviet workers, brought out but not fully discussed in this volume, may well make problems of union representation more acute. One is the economic slowdown, which Dyker notes may soon bring stagnating, or even falling, living standards. And the likelihood of such stagnation producing serious working-class discontent is increased by the other trend: the rising educational levels of younger, better-educated workers.

In his essay on education Yawitch argues convincingly that the most urgent problem here is not so much one of inequalities, though these persist, as of a mismatch between education and jobs. Workers with secondary education often have to do tedious, unskilled jobs; and dissatisfactions of poor working conditions and low pay are compounded by exclusion from decision-making - something that many young workers are less prepared to accept than their parents.

Because the Soviet régime cannot offer workers substantial material improvements it is all the more likely to make concessions in the area of participation and representation. Current measures to strengthen participation and invigorate union defence of workers' rights may owe their timing to the Polish events of 1980, but in substance they mark the beginnings of a longer-term response to longer-term shifts in the position of the worker within the Soviet system.

time to reach the fighting area with his troops.

However, though the policy of fostering Finnish culture and economic prosperity undoubtedly earned a great deal of sympathy for the Petersburg government among the Finns, it also contributed powerfully to the awakening among them of the feeling of national identity which, in the 1860s under Alexander II, was further strengthened by the adoption of a national flag. In the following decade, after the participation of the Finns in the Russo-Turkish war, a Finnish army under its own officer, with the further important concession of limiting its role to the defence of Finland and the throne. (The attitude of the Finns to Alexander II can be judged from the fact that his monument still stands in the Cathedral square in Helsinki.)

Unfortunately, in the next two reigns the Russian government failed to maintain its liberal attitude. At the end of the last century it tried to embark on a policy of russification, prompted, according to Paasivirta, by three considerations: the rise of Western drift of Finnish society, and the growing importance of military preparedness which "pushed aside more flexible political procedures". The new policy, however, nothing beyond driving the Finns into the uncharacteristic action of assassinating the Russian Governor-General and destroying the friendly relations which had existed between the two countries. Measures intended to check Finnish separatism were in

fact difficult to apply. The attempt to extend the Russian military call-up to the Finnish population, making it liable to serve in Russian military units, was met with passive resistance and soon abandoned, and after the 1905 revolution in Russia, things returned to the situation prevailing before the ill-fated attempt at russification.

In fact, though Russian pressure in this direction continued, it was only half-hearted. The Russians did nothing in 1906 to discourage the reform of the Finnish Diet - which introduced a unicameral system - or the extension of the suffrage to include women, Finland being the first country in the world to achieve such a measure. "It was", comments Paasivirta, "remarkable that progress in any part of the Russian empire should have been carried so far". The same was true of the Finnish socialist movement. Paasivirta offers no explanation of this, merely remarking: "It is strange that the tsarist regime, despite its generally conservative nature... allowed the workers' movement to organize in Finland very freely - although at the same time the workers' movement sharply criticized the St Petersburg government and... was expanding with explosive force."

The St Petersburg government got its reward a few years later, at the time of the First World War, when "the [Finnish] workers' newspapers indirectly demonstrated loyalty to the empire" and were supported in this by the bulk of the population. It needed the 1917 Russian revolution and the abdication of the emperor for Finland finally to cut her links with Russia and choose independence in place of autonomy.

A stern critic of Russia's Finnish policy, than Professor Paasivirta might justifiably object that he slips over the inequities of the russification policy; and the bitter opposition shown to it by all classes of the Finnish population, demonstrating thereby the low-key approach to international problems so typical of his countrymen. But it is almost superfluous to point out that anyone wishing to understand Finland's present relations with the Soviet Union, and the real meaning of the term "finlandization", would be wise to read this important (and competently translated) book.

A Short History of Chess

When Chess began in India
The bishops charged as elephants.
The queen was still a minister
And both were clearly combatants.

In battles secular and male.
Who claims that Eastern ways perplex?
It took the West to twist the tale
To strategies of faith and sex.

Dick Davis

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cutting down the canon

By Julian Roberts

GEORGE WATSON (Editor):
The Shorter New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature
1,622 columns. Cambridge University Press. £40.
0 521 22600 7

A visit to a neighbouring bookshop revealed that the current price of the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature has reached £243. After the texts, this is the first book that the teacher of English literature needs, and it is therefore fortunate that a shorter NCBEL has now appeared.

The original CBEL was, as its creator, F. W. Bateson, acknowledged, a descendant of the Cambridge History of English Literature, and its aim was to supply a modern (as of 1935-38) equivalent of the CBEL bibliographies. Such was the sheer scale of English studies that thirty-four years elapsed between the two publications. Such was CBEL's grand comprehensiveness that it

could begin with St Patrick (who had probably never heard of the English) or Gildas (who did not think of them as producers of literature) and ultimately include "all writings in book-form (whether in English or Latin) that can still be said to possess some literary interest, by natives of what is now the British Empire, up to the year 1900". The enormous expansion in English studies, particularly in America, required a revision of CBEL (which had already gained a Supplement from the hands of George Watson in 1957). The New CBEL was forced to acknowledge that the literatures of the Commonwealth (though not of Ireland) were now as independent as that of the United States. Yet by the typographical genius of the Cambridge Press the increased knowledge of the canon of English writers, and the far greater volume of critical, historical and explanatory material on them, was accommodated in three volumes. A fourth volume on the writers of the period 1900-1950 which had been for some time in preparation was redesigned to range with the early volumes, and a final (rather perfunctory) index volume appeared in 1977.

George Watson, the veteran editor of the Supplement to CBEL, and of two editions of a Concise CBEL, has now produced a Shorter New CBEL in a single volume. The credit lies in this time rather with the photolithographic skills of the Alden Press, but there is still room for a technical triumph. 1,622 columns are about 35mm thick, whereas a similar number was nearly 40 mm thick in New CBEL, Volume 3; this without sacrificing the opacity of the paper. The type-size does not seem to have been reduced, despite the extensive use of reprinting techniques. Only a slight change of colour where, for example, dates of death have been stripped in, betrays a new setting of type. Some entries (for example, that for R. G. Collingwood) have been so heavily cut down that resetting was evidently required.

The professed intention has been to epitomize the New CBEL, while preserving the arrangement and conventions of the parent work. The economy has been made in four ways; by the reduction, usually but not invariably slight, of detail in the record of "primary" material (that is

works by the producers of English literature); the drastic excision of "secondary" material (historical, critical and explanatory material, usually in periodical rather than in monograph form) on these writers; the reduction of both primary and secondary material by and on writers who are not considered to be "literary"; and finally by the omission of whole sections which the editor considers to be "marginal". Thus in the epitomized Volume 3, 1800-1900, the sections "Book production and distribution", "Literary relations with the Continent", "Travel", "Sport", "Education" and "Newspapers and magazines" have gone; about 330 columns out of 1,956.

The effect has thus been to slim the New CBEL down in the direction of a detailed record of literary output in the traditional "imaginative" genres and to ensure that the "primary" dog is not wagged by an enormous "secondary" tail. The works of Joyce in Volume 4 occupied about a page; the secondary material, a half page long. Watson has reduced the two sections to approximate parity.

Thus the Shorter NCBEL will find its warmest welcome in those places where the study of literature takes its most traditional form: the study of a generally agreed canon of authors. Conversely it will be less valuable in places where drama, Journalism, film and television scripts and sociological investigation form part of the English curriculum. Watson's pruning of "marginal" authors has also extended to the marginal works of "mainstream" authors, however. The enormous Boswell canon has, for example, shrunk to exclude many of his legal writings.

The bibliography of English literature is thus slimmer through the use of the knife, but is it fitter? Watson has, like other pruners in wider fields, tried to make it grow a bit; in this case by making additions, "most notably in the twentieth century, and [I] have entered a number of corrections as well".

Not nearly enough of them. The objections that follow are necessarily few, but they all relate to the main thrust of the Shorter New CBEL: the provision of a canon of what authors have written. Take Malraux, the Winchester MS of the *Mort d'Arthur* was acquired by the British Library in 1976. In that year a facsimile of the manuscript was issued by the Early English Text Society, and another of the Caxton text was published by the Scolar Press; and the Pierpont Mor-

gan Library. New light was shed on the relations between the manuscript and the printed text in the *British Library Journal*. Nothing of this appears. The edition of *Tom Jones* by Battestini and Bowers (1974) is unrecorded. So is the Scolar Press reprint (1971) of Sterne's *Political Romance*. In an epitome, one of the first things to go should have been the little synopses attached to each novel under the heading "Eighteenth century minor fiction". Instead, the list has been hacked about, the synopses (leave that sort of thing to Heron Books) are still there, but Robert Bage has been deprived of a novel (*The Fair Syrian*, 1787), while novels by M. G. Lewis, Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft are listed under their individual headings as well, and it isn't clear whether *The Monk* was first published in 1795 or 1796. The entry for Wollstonecraft in New CBEL was a mess, because the compiler apparently ignored the account Godwin gave of his wife's books. The Shorter New CBEL doesn't improve matters.

Twentieth-century authors pose a special problem, as the living continue to add to their canon, while the works of the dead appear in authoritative collections. Authors omitted in Volume 4 - Stevie Smith is an example - rise in critical esteem. Thus Watson can add the 1979 edition of Isaac Rosenberg's *Collected Works*, or the 1978 edition of Edward Thomas's *Collected Poems*. Other poets do not fare so well. R. S. Thomas has produced *H'm* (1972), *The Way Of It* (1977) and *Frequencies* (1978). Not one of these is listed. Henry Reed added, in *Lessons of War* (1970), two poems to the famous three in *A Map of Verona* (1946). One does not have to be a Tolkien addict to believe that if Humphrey Carpenter's 1977 biography can be included, so can *The Sunlight on the Moon*.

It would not be difficult to produce a great many more examples of inconsistencies perpetuated, errors uncorrected and above all of omissions even within the stated (and perfectly reasonable) scope of the Shorter NCBEL. If the Cambridge University Press were properly concerned about the good name of its reference books it should sit some one down for a few hours a week, in a little room in the University Library, who would note, as they were published, the books and articles which need to be added to New CBEL, its epitomes and supplements.

Medical materials

By David McKitterick

JOAN S. EMMERSON (Editor):
Catalogue of the Pybus Collection of Medical Books, Letters and Engravings, 15th-20th Centuries, held in the University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne
270pp. Manchester University Press. £55.
0 7190 1295 3

The late P. C. Pybus has long been celebrated among medical historians as the owner of William Harvey's *Exercitationes de generatione animalium* (1611), annotated by the author himself, but the extent of the rest of his collection has not so far been generally realized. In the space of thirty years, up to about 1930, he amassed a collection on the history of medicine that would be difficult (not to say extraordinarily expensive) to assemble today. A seemingly reticent man, he spoke with authority and ease to those who were privileged to see his collection at his private house in Newcastle.

In 1965 he fulfilled his long-held intention for his collection, and presented it to Newcastle University Library. The *Catalogue of the Pybus Collection* includes descriptions of the two thousand-odd manuscripts

and printed books, from a near-contemporary copy of John Ardenne, the most celebrated English surgeon of the fourteenth century, to the official papers surrounding the Clean Air Act of 1956, an impressive collection of autograph letters, and the 1,200 or so portraits always regarded by Pybus as an integral part of his collection. The publication of such a catalogue is to be welcomed obviously beyond the bounds of Newcastle, though it would have been enhanced by some account of its most generous donor, of whom the obituaries in the *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal* could give only a glimpse.

Quite apart from recording the contents of Professor Pybus's remarkable library, Joan S. Emerson has the good sense to index her catalogue extensively. The indexes to the book trade and to provenance promise to be especially useful, though they are to some extent spoiled by mistakes that a further revision might have eliminated; the French Imprimerie Royale has never operated from Turin, Richard Heber is indexed under B for Bibliophile, and the Royal Library at Munich appears in two places in the provenance index. But these lapses need not detract too seriously from the great value in having readily available the catalogue of a collection of very considerable importance, of which Newcastle can rightly be proud.